

The FLORIDA Reading JOURNAL



In this edition...

Digital Essays: Facilitating
Planning with Struggling
Writers

Rediscovering Interactive
Writing

Using Storytelling to Teach
Science and Social Studies

Notable Books for Children
and Young Adults

Satisfying Your Technolust

Celebrate Literacy Week

The FLORIDA Reading JOURNAL

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Editors' Note...

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Dear Readers:

Enjoying festive dinners with family and friends, watching “It’s a Wonderful Life,” gift giving, lighting the Menorah, and drinking eggnog are a few of the traditions families enjoy during this time of year. Similarly, for over 35 years, the *Florida Reading Journal* has had a tradition of providing its readers with research articles, technology integration ideas, current children’s and young adults’ literature reviews, and practical ideas for the classroom teacher.

As the new coeditors of the *Florida Reading Journal*, we honor that same tradition and continue to develop a well-respected journal for all literacy educators.

Another new member to the editorial staff is the children’s literature columnist, Dr. Thomas Crisp from the University of South Florida Sarasota/Manatee. His column is titled, Literature: Notable Books for Children and Young Adults. You will be pleased with the variety of books he has selected and the thoroughness of his reviews.

The *Florida Reading Journal* has a readership of over 3000. We are confident that within this large number are individuals who are contemplating the publication of their scholarly work. We invite you to submit an essay about your teaching experience, research you have conducted, or a literacy strategy you successfully implemented in your classroom. We look forward to hearing from you.

Happy Holidays,

Ruth Sylvester & Sherry Kragler

Editors



From the President...

Sherida Weaver
Florida Reading Association President

The year 2010 has been a busy one for us all. As educators, we have been faced with salary cuts, healthcare reductions, new job responsibilities, and added requirements. I am totally exhausted!

Teachers at my school site meet almost every day and leave with yet more tasks to add to our already full agendas. We are inundated with RtI, Professional Learning Communities and Essential Questions.

Upon reflection I know that our administration is following the district, who is in turn following state mandates. One might ask, "What is in the educator's control in the everyday function of their jobs?" The answer to that question for me is the fact that I can still be creative.

Teachers are entrepreneurs who are able to find ways around all of the red tape so truly great teaching can take place in their classrooms. I look at the mandates and the million little pieces the administration wants us to do and think of ways to do it my way, yet still follow what is being asked.

Yes, we need Essential Questions, but you already knew that from writing lesson plans using Madeline Hunter's outlines. Remember set focus and objectives?

RtI is the great focus now, but it has been in our teaching forever. RtI is just a refined method to look at data and come up with ways to reach each student. We have always had those students in our classrooms who needed differentiated instruction. Now we have a name to attach to the process of getting them to reach their full potential.

Professional Learning Communities is another relatively new term that simply means peer interaction. We have been doing this for a long time at our school sites, at FRA conferences, and at IRA conferences. Sharing and learning with our peers is the best kind of interaction.

Today the demands on educators are varied and large. We are pulled in many directions, and we are expected to perform at a high standard. It can be easy to become tired and frustrated. I urge you to use your winter break to refresh your spirit and consider how important your job is to the many students that you are in contact with daily. Remember to put some fun and creativity into your daily plans. Don't forget that you have the ability to bring life to your lesson plans.

May you and your precious families enjoy a restorative and peaceful winter break, and may 2011 be your best year ever!

Yours Sincerely,
Sherida Weaver
Your FRA President



Call for Manuscripts

The Florida Reading Journal publishes manuscripts related to literacy research and classroom practice. Research syntheses and creative works are also considered for the journal. *The Florida Reading Journal* (FRJ) has a readership of approximately 7000 teachers, literacy coaches, teacher-educators, and literacy researchers.

Information for Authors:

Authors are requested to submit only unpublished articles not under review by any other publication. A manuscript (8-14 pages) should be typed, double spaced, not right justified, not hyphenated, and should follow the 6th edition guidelines of APA (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association).

Submit online as an email attachment which is Microsoft Word compatible in .doc, docx, or .rtf format (Mac users please remember to add extensions). Include a cover page which contains the manuscript title, the author(s), institutional affiliation, contact information, and date of submission. Remove any information from the manuscript that might identify the author(s).

Manuscripts are first reviewed by an internal review board for appropriateness of the manuscript for the journal. If it is evaluated as a good fit, the manuscript is blind, peer-reviewed by three members of the Editorial Review Board. If the manuscript is accepted, the coeditors reserve editorial rights. The review process takes about 2 months. The acceptance rate is 25%.

The journal is published in March, June, and December.

Send manuscripts by e-mail as an attachment to frjeditor@flreads.org

**Coeditors: Dr. Sherry Kragler and Dr. Ruth Sylvester
(University of South Florida Polytechnic)**



The Just Read, Florida! Office and the Florida Department of Education (DOE), in partnership with other DOE offices, school districts and numerous other state organizations and agencies, is planning a statewide **“Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!”** event, scheduled for the week of **January 24-28, 2011**. Mark your calendars now for this important week of events!

The goals of “Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida!” are to promote literacy throughout the state by raising awareness of the great things happening in school districts and the programs and projects offered by the DOE and its partner agencies and organizations. Most of all, the objective is to promote the enjoyment of reading for children and adults of all ages. As part of the Just Read, Florida! Celebrate Literacy Week, we are providing multiple opportunities for you as a district to support this effort and to promote literacy in your local schools.

Once again, we will sponsor the 26 second public service announcement (PSA) contest that celebrates and promotes the importance of literacy in the state of Florida. Students in elementary, middle and high schools in all school districts are invited to participate in the PSA contest. This activity was a HUGE success for the past 2 years and we are anxiously awaiting the creativity that your schools and students will bring to this competition for the 2011 event. Information on the PSA contest will arrive via email to you, the district reading contact, and we ask that you disperse all information to the schools and staff in order to allow ample time to produce the PSA.

In addition to the PSA contest, the Just Read, Florida! office is providing district contacts additional resources through the sample Celebrate Literacy, Week! Calendar. This calendar will guide you as you prepare activities within your schools and community focused around literacy week. We have also included a Celebrate Literacy, Week! Events template, which you can complete and return to the Just Read, Florida! office. Once your events are scheduled, please submit the schedule to the Just Read, Florida! office and we will, in turn, post it on the Just Read, Florida! website for others to view. The Celebrate Literacy, Week! events are where you can share with us, your local community and others all the various activities you have scheduled in your district that are centered around Celebrate Literacy, Week! You may submit your Celebrate Literacy, Week! plan to Hope Colle at Hope.Colle@fldoe.org

As you plan your district events, you might be interested in hearing about some of the activities prepared for Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! here in the Department. The Department of Education employees will enjoy daily events such as a library environment where they can read and enjoy a quiet lunch break, a book drive to benefit a local rescue agency, display tables where various departments can share literacy materials, highlighting local and DOE authors and featuring children of fellow DOE employees as they read from their favorite books.

For more information, please visit the Just Read, Florida! website at <http://www.justreadflorida.com/> and go to the Celebrate Literacy Week, Florida! link. We look forward to your participation in this literacy event and thank you for your commitment to making literacy the highest priority every day in your district and schools!

Let's celebrate together!
The Just Read, Florida! Staff

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Digital Essays: Facilitating Planning with Struggling Writers

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Abstract: This article describes the process for using the digital essay as a motivational tool to help struggling writers during the planning process

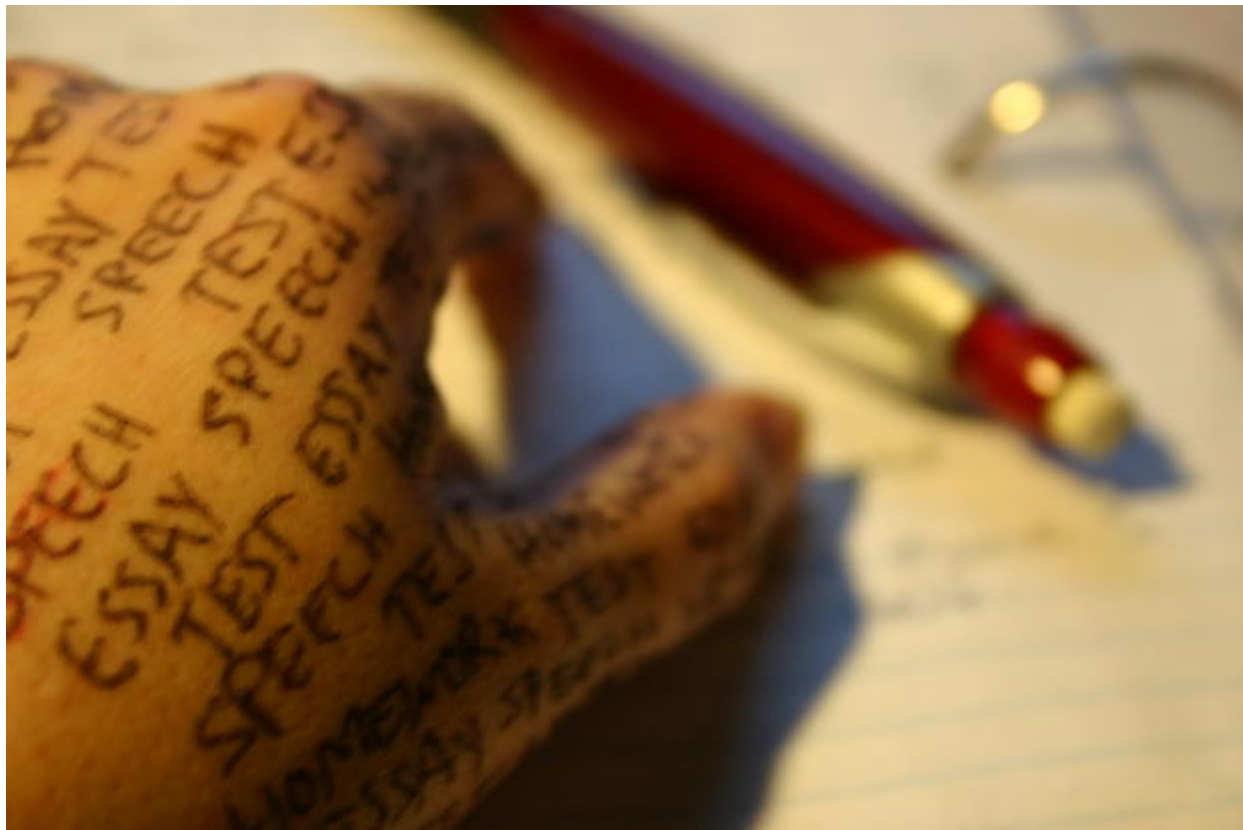
Students' ability to write well is essential to their success in school and can have a significant impact on their post-school outcomes (Anderson, Heibert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985; Boscolo, 2008; Graham, 2006). Good writing, however, can be difficult. It involves not only a basic understanding of mechanics and conventions such as spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure, but also an awareness of and engagement in all stages of the writing process (i.e., planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing) (Cunningham & Allington, 2006; Deatline-Buchanan & Jitendra, 2006; Graham & Harris, 1988). Researchers have found that writers who are most proficient spend the majority of their time in the early stages of the writing process, planning and drafting their work, and spend less time on mechanics and conventions (MacArthur, 2009; Nauman, 2007; Shin Ju, Monroe, & Troia, 2007).

While the later stages of the writing process are also important to producing good finished products, research has shown that the most effective use of time is spent planning (Hillocks, 1986). In fact, good writers spend the majority of their time, over 80%, planning (Murray, 2003). It is during planning that writers develop and set goals, engage in research, and create an outline (De La Paz,

1997; Murray, 2003). Planning allows writers to consider why they are writing, what they are going to write about, and who they are writing for (i.e., purpose, content, and audience). Effective planning can increase the "length, quality and organizational structure" of an essay (Graham & Harris, 2003, p. 324).

Struggling writers

Despite the importance of planning to the production of good writing, researchers have found that struggling writers spend little time planning for writing (MacArthur, 2009). This occurs, in part, because not enough instructional time is devoted to teaching students how to plan for their writing tasks. The majority of instruction time, as much as 35 of the average 45 minute writing instructional session, is spent working on mechanics and grammar, with less than 10 minutes spent providing instructional strategies for planning and drafting (Cutler & Graham, 2008; Moats, Foorman, & Taylor, 2006). This overemphasis on grammar and mechanics encourages students to speed through the planning stage, so that they can devote more time to editing their ill-planned work (McAlister, Nelson, & Bahr, 1999; Saddler & Graham, 2007). While writers need to know the conventions of grammar and usage, devoting so much instructional time to



these skills has led many students to underestimate the importance of carefully considering audience and purpose, and planning their writing based on these considerations (Tompkins, 2002).

For writers who struggle, explicit instruction is needed in the planning process (Santangelo & Olinghouse, 2009). When Troia, Graham, & Harris (1999) implemented an intervention that involved training fifth grade students struggling with writing to engage in extensive planning, they found an increase in the amount of relevant information used to support the primary points (i.e., elaboration) in students' writing. Similarly Saddler, Moran, Graham, & Harris (2004) found a planning intervention resulted in increased elaboration, organization, and generalization to other kinds of writing in second grade struggling writers.

As these interventions indicate, explicit planning instruction can significantly improve the work of struggling writers. Effective

planning instruction should focus on motivating students to consider audience and purpose, generate and organize ideas, and include modeling, guided, and independent practice (Kos & Maslowski, 2001). This article describes the process for using the digital essay as a motivational tool to help struggling writers during the planning process. The ultimate goal is for the struggling writer to transfer skills acquired during the process of planning for the creation of a digital essay to the creation of traditional print essays.

Writing and technology

Soon after easy to use word processing programs were developed in the 1980s, educators recognized their potential not only as writing aids, but also as potential tools for teaching writing (Milone, 1984). As computer-aided writing technology has developed and been refined, some teachers have tried to embrace computer-assisted instruction (CAI) as a boon to their teaching. However, while

computers have clearly changed the way we write, the teaching of writing has remained largely unchanged. Early on, advocates for fully embracing new instruction techniques called for teachers to use computer technology to teach new ways of planning, drafting, and revising that were impossible with pen and paper (Strickland, 1987). More than a decade later, advocates for branching out beyond pen and paper based techniques were still pointing out that teachers were, for the most part, resisting significant changes in the way composition is taught (Selfe, 1999). Even contemporary supporters of CAI continue to assert that computers are not being used to their fullest potential in teaching writing (Bacci, 2008).

While teachers have primarily focused on using computer technology to teach traditional literacy skills, twenty-first century students are increasingly required to not just be literate in the traditional sense of being able to read thoughtfully and write well, but *multiliterate*. Using computer technology effectively and to its fullest potential requires that students recognize and comprehend visual cues like icons and navigation bars, and requires that they are able to communicate using not just words, but still images, moving images, and audio (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009). Just as computer technology has opened up new possibilities for communication to students, it offers teachers new challenges for how to teach students to use these technologies effectively, and how to translate these skills, which students are often eager to learn, back to foundational writing skills, with which many students struggle.

Every teacher recognizes the importance of students being literate in the traditional sense; despite the need for students to have new literacies beyond the classroom, traditional writing skills are still the ones that are most commonly assessed, and are still vital to student achievement in the classroom and beyond. However, teachers must also

recognize that it is important to prepare students for the new literacy demands of digital media (International Reading Association, 2001; Leu, Mallette, Karchmer, & Kara-Soteriou, 2005). One way to achieve both aims is have students work on both traditional literacy and new digital literacy skills at the same time. Having students create persuasive digital essays allows teachers to facilitate the learning of digital literacy skills as well as traditional literacy skills through planning for the creation of traditional persuasive essays.

A persuasive digital essay, like its print counterpart, requires students to brainstorm for ideas, develop a claim, consider their purpose as they gather evidence and organize their ideas, and make convincing appeals to persuade an audience. These skills are all transferrable to the creation of a print persuasive essay. Having students create a persuasive digital essay with a program such as *Photostory 3*, allows students to use still images and audio narration to make their arguments. Allowing students to create a multimedia project such as this is a strong motivator for students (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009; Burn & Reed, 1999). It can also be especially motivating to struggling writers who are excited about the opportunity to express their ideas in new ways (Sylvester & Greenidge, 2009; Reid, Parker, and Burn, 2002). This motivation is amplified when the students know that they will be able to share their digital essays with a larger audience than they typically can for a traditional essay (Cohen & Riel, 1989). Using such programs, a student can decide on a main idea for a writing piece, create an outline to support the main idea, choose and import images to accompany the outline, narrate the images using the computer's microphone, and choose music to accompany the final product. Once completed, these digital essays can be shared as short two to five minute video clips with a viewing audience of teachers and peers, and even be posted on the internet to be viewed by a wider audience. This prospect makes struggling

writers eager to learn the process by which these finished products can be produced.

Writing and technology: A classroom study on planning for persuasive writing

We will describe how technology, *Photostory 3*, can be used to motivate struggling writers to focus more time on the planning process of writing. The primary benefit of using technology to produce writing is that writing pieces can be easily made public, and so students can envision their audience and know that their audience will experience their work (Banaszewski, 2002; Burn & Reed, 1999). This helps to establish a purpose for writing, which is especially important for struggling writers. Based on the benefits cited in the research regarding the importance of effective planning, we decided to incorporate *Photostory 3* as a method for increasing the amount of time students spent planning for writing, and to help students understand that planning does not end once writing begins.

Downloading *Photostory 3* involves going to the program's website and clicking the download link. *Photostory 3* was used instead of alternative technology applications, because we were familiar with the program and we had multiple examples of finished products readily available as good models for student viewing. Alternative technology applications (e.g., *Moviemaker* and *Powerpoint*) with similar features may also be used. The examples provided are based on a unit on persuasive writing. When we evaluated the previous descriptive and narrative writing samples of the students involved in the project, we encountered organizational (i.e., how well ideas flow and connect), elaboration (i.e., adding details to main ideas), spelling, and grammar issues. We will contextualize our description by providing examples of how two students (Guy and Lara-both names are pseudonyms) from a classroom of 13 fifth graders struggling with writing navigated the process of using *Photostory 3* to create persuasive digital essays.

The students were chosen because they provided a good representative sample of the writing characteristics exhibited in the classroom as a whole. The whole process lasted approximately two weeks.

Guy

Guy was an eleven year old African American male student who lived with his mother and younger brother. Since the beginning of the year he had frequent behavioral outbursts that coincided with teacher requests to perform non-preferred tasks (e.g., reading aloud, writing on demand, completing math worksheets). Guy's teacher often spoke of his quickness to shut down and a general unwillingness to share his feelings. Although Guy had difficulty with organization and elaboration in his writing he was still one of the better writers in the classroom. This was especially evident when he wrote about topics that were of high interest. Guy, like many students in the classroom had previously exhibited increased positive behaviors and motivation when using technology in the classroom. In fact, he was one of the first students to fully understand how to use the *Photostory* application and was excited to begin the assignment. Guy, like a few others of his classmates, decided to focus his persuasive digital essay on the topic of recycling. He expressed that he chose the topic because of all the trash he had seen around his neighborhood. He hoped he could make a digital essay to convince other kids from his neighborhood about the importance of recycling.

Guy began storyboarding his digital essay using a layout provided by his classroom teacher. The layout allowed students to map their essay narration and draw a sample of pictures they would like to locate during their online image searches. A list of student friendly online image websites is provided in Table 1. Although the sites provided in the table are student friendly, be sure to monitor students as they perform their images searches.

One strategy Guy's classroom teacher provided all students in the class during whole group modeling was using visualization. He made use of this strategy and would often draw a picture of his points before devising a description. Guy knew he wanted to start his digital essay with a statement and an image that would grab the viewers' attention. After having visualized and drawn a picture of plastic bags floating in the local river, Guy was able to create a very convincing hook, "Stop poisoning the earth with plastic." From this opening hook, Guy went on to discuss the negative impact of not recycling on animals. He stated, "Some animals mistake plastic for food. Many of them die from that mistake." Guy went on to make an important connection between plastic and oil by asking, "Do you know that the plastic you use is not what it seems? It's actually oil. Do you want to use oil to carry your groceries? I wouldn't." Guy went on to suggest to the viewers, "Don't throw away a plastic bag in the trash can...use a recycle bin. If you recycle you can get paid. It's probably not much but it's something...right?" Guy completed his digital essay by making a powerful statement about what our country should do with plastic bags. He wrote, "If China, Israel, Canada, Singapore, and Uganda can ban plastic bags so can we."

Guy's digital product was one of the best in the class. His narration could be likened to spoken word poetry and was arguably better than the narration the adults had provided when we created our own sample models for the students. It was evident that he did considerable research to support his points. Some of the adults who viewed his final product admitted to not knowing that plastic bags had been banned in so many countries. We have since begun using Guy's digital essays as a model example for incorporating technology and literacy in classrooms in our college courses.

Table 1: Image Websites for Students

Image Websites for Students
http://www.askkids.com/
http://www.classroomclipart.com
http://www.kidsclick.org/psearch.html
http://www.kidzui.com/
http://www.picsearch.com/
http://www.tekmom.com/search/#Images

Lara

Lara was a twelve year old Caucasian American female student who lived with her mother. She was a very well behaved and compliant student. She had one of the most significant difficulties in the area of writing in her class. Her problems with writing included devising topics, organizing ideas, adding details, revising, and editing her compositions. Lara's teacher hoped that the real world aspects (e.g., presenting to a real audience and pairing text with pictures and sound) of *Photostory* would positively impact her ability to develop and organize topic ideas. Lara experienced some trouble learning some of the components of the *Photostory* application and so her classroom teacher had another student, who had learned the application quickly, assist Lara with some additional practice in such areas as saving and retrieving images and recording narration. The topic that Lara chose, showing kindness to animals, was also chosen by many of her classmates. Lara expressed that this topic was very important to her because she had seen many stray animals in her neighborhood that had been mistreated. She hoped her digital essay would convince other students about why cruelty to animals is wrong.

Lara began her storyboard as other students in her class did, by devising a hook to grab her audience. Her teacher expressed that Lara had a bit of difficulty devising the hook and so they spent additional time during mini lessons working collaboratively to brainstorm, share, and listen to ideas shared by other classmates. Lara eventually created the hook, "Do you

know that thousands of animals are being abused right outside your door?" She accompanied her narration with an image of an animal standing outside the front door of a house with a lonely expression on its face. In an effort to convince her audience of the severity of the problem, she stated a statistic. She wrote, "Over 30% of people abuse or abandon animals. This leaves animals wandering around the street." Lara went on to provide an example to personalize the problem. She stated, "On the street behind my house there are a lot of cats wandering around looking for food and shelter." She continued with an effective appeal to the viewer's fears by stating, "If you abuse animals you may be behind bars for breaking the law." This narration was accompanied by a menacing image of a young person behind bars. Lara completed her digital essay by defining what it means to be kind to animals. She wrote, "It is important to feed and provide shelter for your pet." She provided viewers with alternatives if they are unable to take proper care of their pet by stating, "If you have a pet you don't want don't abuse or beat it up...give it to a shelter."

Lara produced a good digital product that included many convincing points. Lara's teacher remarked that she seemed more motivated to continue developing research ideas to support her topic for the digital essay than she had been for previous traditional print essays. It is possible that the concrete experience of presenting the digital essay to a real audience had a significant impact on Lara's increased understanding about the concepts of audience and purpose for writing and being motivated to successfully complete the writing task in general.

Sharing and Applying *Photostory 3*

We found that students were motivated to take the time needed for extensive planning in the creation of the digital essays. There were only four computers in the classroom and so completing the digital essays required some

creativity on our part. We put a structure in place that allowed students to rotate through mini-lessons, independent writing, and digital essays. However, students also made requests to work on their digital essay during their structured free time such as *Fun Fridays* and semi-structured free time such as completing assigned tasks early. This motivation to work on the assignment was true for the majority of the students in the class. Students were also willing to use their free time to listen to each others' narrations and provide feedback. The student to student feedback ranged from "I couldn't understand that. Maybe you should slow down a little" to "Do you have any research to back that up?"

Once all the students completed their digital essays we set a showcase date. We invited members of the school faculty that had worked closely with many of the students. The students were very excited to share their creations not only with their peers but with their teachers as well. During the days leading up to the showcase students would frequently remind their other teachers about the showcase and ask about their availability during that time. In attendance were the special education resource teacher, the speech language pathologist, the behavior resource teacher, the classroom teacher, and classroom students. Students' reactions to the showcase varied from gregarious to bashful. Some students like Guy wanted to make frequent interjections to illustrate his process or how he helped others as different images appeared on the screen. He would ask, "Do you know how hard it was to find that picture?" Or he would say, "I helped you with that." Other students, like Laura, appeared quiet while the teachers in the viewing audience made positive comments. They said things like, "This is impressive Lara," or "I didn't know that was true."

Once we completed the viewings of the digital essays we began to focus on making explicit connections between the planning involved with creating digital essays and creating

traditional print essays. Arguably, the most significant aspect of infusing digital essays as a planning tool was the concrete and interactive experiences it fostered for students. We found that the process of creating a product that students knew would be viewed by a variety of audience members created a real reason for students to pay close attention to traditional essay elements. For example, students like Guy who would normally resist the idea of taking the time to engage in brainstorming were motivated to devise numerous attention grabbers before settling on just one. The importance of thorough research also became clear for students as they wanted to be able to create the most convincing argument for their viewing audience. Creating the digital essay also allowed students to see the importance of organization in that the way and order in which information was presented had a significant impact on the power and effectiveness of their arguments. Overall, we observed that the digital essays really laid the foundations on which students were able to build their traditional essays.

Students like Guy, who often shut down during writing time, were engaged and motivated to improve their essays during the paper/pencil portion of the project. Students often expressed relief in knowing that after creating their digital essays they were “over half way through their traditional essays,” because all they had to do was just “add some points here and there.” Even students like Lara, who struggled with writing, seemed to gain feelings of self-efficacy and increased confidence in their ability to create a good finished product. Students also seemed less resistant to elaborate on specific points during the traditional essays based on peer and teacher feedback provided as a result of the creation of the digital essays.

Conclusion

Having students learn how to create and publish digital essays helped motivate them to engage in extensive planning for their work,

and it also helped them understand that the issues addressed during planning are also present during drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. We observed students applying the planning strategies they learned while creating their digital essays to planning for their traditional essays. In addition, we observed students more engaged in drafting and revising their traditional essays, and more aware of the prewriting concepts they learned to focus on while planning and creating their digital essays (e.g., considering audience, purpose, organization, and the effectiveness of how they present their ideas). The interactive and multimedia aspects of creating and publishing digital essays provided students with (a) an increased sense of purpose and excitement for persuading an audience about something that was personally meaningful; (b) increased collaboration and feedback among peers; (c) an opportunity for an authentic showcase of their products; (d) and real reasons for making changes and additions to their pieces.

Our experiences with digital essays suggest that having students use computer technology to create something they could not create with just pen and paper can empower them with both digital and traditional literacy skills associated with listening, speaking, reading, and writing. This is important for all students, but can be particularly motivating for struggling writers who have had difficulty learning how to effectively communicate in print. As previously stated, the process necessary to plan for the creation of digital essays is similar to the planning process for the creation of traditional print essays. The digital essay requires that extended time be spent considering purpose, content, and audience before writing. In addition, substantial time is spent generating and organizing ideas before writing and before words can be combined with images and sounds. Struggling writers often gloss over the planning process when the end result is a traditional essay; however, the promise of a digital essay emerging from this process can be a strong motivator for students

to spend extensive time planning. Once struggling writers have learned to use and have seen the benefits of effective planning through the creation of digital essays, teachers can make explicit connections to planning traditional print essays.

For teachers who would like to motivate students in planning using multimedia authoring software, choose an application that contains three basic features (i.e., narration, images, and music). Teachers also need to decide how they would like to use the authoring software. Teachers should work with the program and try to create model examples for students. It can be used to motivate struggling students for a variety of purposes such as descriptive essays and narrative stories.

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Rediscovering Interactive Writing

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Abstract: This article revisits interactive writing as a method for assisting beginning writers in connecting oral and written language.

“Teacher, Teacher, I want to write next!” These words are commonly expressed by children as they participate in the pleasure of an interactive writing lesson. Not only do students experience the delight of writing with the teacher, but there is potential for powerful learning opportunities in developing literacy skills and strategies within each session. Interactive writing is a process effective in early grades to assist beginners in making the connection between oral and written language. The teacher and students jointly compose a text, and the teacher demonstrates the thinking and writing process as the text is written word-by-word on chart paper. Students participate orally and share the pen with the teacher as the text is constructed. The encoding and decoding (building up and breaking down) processes are demonstrated while the teacher engages students in creating text (Swartz, Klein, & Shook, 2002).

Interactive writing is an essential part of a comprehensive literacy model to develop understandings about reading and writing in young learners (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000; Pinnell & Fountas, 1998). The purpose of this article is to encourage primary teachers to rediscover the power of interactive writing for developing reading and writing skills. This is essential for students who struggle to become proficient readers and writers, especially English learners. My observations of primary teachers suggest that many teachers are challenged when trying to teach effective interactive writing lessons. This article will focus on those areas I have found to be difficult

for teachers and provide suggestions for making lessons more effective.

A chart created over several days becomes the product of an interactive writing lesson. However, sometimes teachers are more focused on the product than the process. An emphasis on process allows the teacher to look for opportunities to teach with each written word. Interactive writing is useful for beginning readers and writers to attend to the sounds of words and to notice spelling patterns in writing. Letter/sound knowledge and high frequency words are explicitly taught in the context of the experience as the teacher stops to draw attention to the connection between a sound and a letter or provide instruction in how a letter is formed or to learn the sequence of letters in a high frequency word. As students become skilled in applying their knowledge of the alphabetic principle, they are taught to problem-solve unknown words through the use of spelling patterns, syllables, and analogy. More advanced stages of interactive writing demonstrates the use of grammar, editing procedures, the use of descriptive language, organizational ideas, spelling knowledge, modeling, and assisted practice in writing different kinds of texts or genres. From the earliest stages, students learn to reread after a word or phrase is written assuring that the text is making sense and sounding right. Although teaching is not necessary with each word, the teacher is constantly evaluating, “What can I teach related to this word, or do we write it down quickly to allow more time for an upcoming part of the text?”

As children become more proficient writers, teachers up the ante by having students attend to elements that challenge them. Once children move beyond the letter/sound connections, the teacher begins to explore how words work and makes connections between known words and unknown words (see/street, and/stand. my/trying). The teacher's job is to know her students well and to challenge them in a way that will promote new learning with each interactive writing lesson. As a result, teaching points become more sophisticated as the year progresses.

Composing the Text

A key feature of interactive writing is to write for authentic purposes. The writing is based on shared school experiences. Topics can be related to what is being studied in the classroom in science or social studies, a field trip, or to the reading of a children's literature text. During the interactive writing process, students and the teacher talk about what they are going to write. These conversations not only extend student language, but become rehearsal for composing the interactive writing text (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). The teacher guides the discussion by prompting, modeling, confirming, and summarizing the students' ideas (Swartz, Klein, & Shook, 2002). A "Facts About Sea Animals" chart might be constructed while the group is studying sea life. A welcome letter for Open House could be created and displayed on the door for families to read as they arrive for the special event. A thank you note might be written to the Fire Department after the class field trip. Instead of purchasing commercial posters, familiar poems, songs, rules, or procedures could be recreated on charts. A favorite story could be retold after repeated readings. Children pay attention to what they have produced; thus, interactive writing charts become valuable and useful to them because they participated in creating them. Other ideas

for interactive writing lessons are included in Table 1.

Table 1: Ideas for Interactive Writing Charts

Class rules	Notes	Facts About Chart	Theme Word Lists
Days of the week	Invitations	Field Trip Experiences	Procedure Charts
Months of the year	Recipes	Room Labels	"How To" Charts
Color chart	Thank you notes	Retellings	Parts of Speech
Poems	Letters	Definitions	Math Word Problems
Nursery rhymes	Summaries	Songs	Math Concepts
Patterned sentences	Word Charts	Lists	Math graph narrative

Selecting an engaging topic is essential to the success of the interactive writing event. Once selected, the teacher spends time with the students discussing what they know about the topic or reviewing the experience. A list or a web might be quickly generated to record key ideas to help with the sequencing of ideas when writing the text. Throughout the whole group discussion, questions might be posed to allow time for students to turn to a partner to generate more ideas before returning to the whole group conversation. The teacher then helps students narrow down their "talk" into a text that can be written by the group in a reasonable amount of time. Often a chart may take several days to complete with the first day spent mostly on the orally composing after quickly creating a graphic organizer or list of key words or pictures. At the end of each lesson, the teacher records the next part of the negotiated text. In this way, the group can begin immediately, continuing where they left off on the previous day.

Procedures for Interactive Writing

There is no right way to do interactive writing. I have coached many teachers and new teacher candidates as they learned to teach interactive

writing lessons. I have found the following suggestions to be helpful to novices when implementing interactive writing lessons.

1. Students are first taught procedures for interactive writing: where to sit; how to sit; how to get the teacher's attention; how to walk up to the chart without bumping into students; how to move to the side so another student can walk by when it is their turn; how to contribute to the discussion; how to turn and share with a partner, etc. The teacher begins interactive writing with an easy and familiar topic to make it easier to teach the expected behaviors for effective interactive writing sessions.

2. Once procedures have been taught and practiced, time is taken for discussion about the writing topic. A text is negotiated and quickly written by the teacher in a notebook. The students repeat the first sentence several times to hold it in their memory. The teacher reminds students as needed while creating the chart. The whole text may take several days to complete with a focus on process and the teaching/learning opportunities along the way.

3. The teacher and children share the pen at various points in the writing. The text is written word-by-word, and the teacher and children periodically reread up to the last word written. This keeps the group focus on the big ideas of what is being written and also encourages phrased and fluent reading. The teacher knows her students well and asks each to come up to write what she knows he is capable of writing. Sometimes the teacher writes the words, but more often, different children contribute a letter, several letters, a whole word, or several words depending on each student's ability level or the grade level. The teacher must make the decision about where to spend the teaching time. There does not need to be a teaching point with every word. The text is written in large, black letters for easy reading and consolidation of

directionality. Multiple colors distract the eye and may interfere with the left-to-right movement students need to establish early in learning to read and write.

4. When getting to a word students do not know how to write, the teacher asks them to say it slowly, listening for each sound. The teacher models slow and clear articulation. It is important for the teacher to make sure the students are also slowly articulating the word with her matching their lips to hers. My observations have shown that students with the most difficulty hearing and recording sounds in words do not know how to slow down the word and listen for the sounds. A whiteboard or a Magnadoodle is used to show the letters as the sounds are being articulated; then the word or letters/ sounds are added to the text by one of the students. Some words are high frequency words that are written in quickly by the teacher or a student. Other words, which are almost under control for most of the children in the class, can be reviewed as "a word we almost know." Further instruction is provided to solidify the sequence of letters in that word. A multisyllabic word can be analyzed part by part after clapping the word. The teacher records the word parts on a whiteboard during analysis to allow the students to see what they are hearing. The teacher fills in any tricky part of the word that is too complex for the students.

5. As the message is written on the chart, the teacher helps the children attend to important concepts about print such as letter formation, spaces between words, capital and lower case letters, punctuation, return sweep, etc. Learning is more likely when the teacher selects clear and memorable examples so that students have an understanding of what to apply to their own writing. It is important not to overload the students with too much teaching in one session. Daily, short interactive writing lessons are better than twice a week lessons for longer periods.

Table 2: Sequence of Activities in an Interactive Writing Lesson

Before the IW Lesson	During the IW Lesson	After IW Lesson
-Procedures are well-established, modeled, and reviewed.	-Teacher models thinking, reading, writing aloud and allows for student "think time."	-While the end product may not look neat, it is error-free, well-spaced, and legible from a distance.
-Negotiation of text includes extensive discussion based on experience (see idea chart): field trip, invitation, summary, retelling, list, chart, story, rules, letter, labels, etc.	-Teacher keeps students actively engaged while one student at the chart: letter formation, word families, analogy, descriptive language, next part of text, connections to the resources on the wall.	-Strategies learned can be observed in independent writing.
		-Frequent rereading of completed interactive chart for fluency and review.

In summary, the interactive writing lesson has three distinct parts that may be experienced over several days. Before the lesson the teacher establishes procedures and shapes up student behaviors, so that the writing experience is quick and efficient. After composing the text, the chart is constructed with teacher and students sharing the pen. It is critical that the teacher keeps teaching while the one student comes up to write. It is during these powerful teaching moments that new teaching/learning occurs driven by observations of students' independent writing. Once the chart is complete, it is reread again checking to make sure it makes sense, sounds right, and the words look right. Another purpose for the rereading is to teach for phased and fluent reading. The chart continues to be a learning tool because it is placed on the wall as a resource for students during independent writing and as a record of learning. Table 2 provides a quick reference for what occurs before, during, and after the interactive writing lesson and is found at the end of this article.

An Intermediary Tool

Interactive writing lessons are more powerful in whole group instruction because the chart becomes a shared experience that all the

students revisit as a resource over and over in the weeks and months following its completion. For this reason, the text needs to be legible and large to be viewed on the wall from across the room. Laminating is not a good idea because the light reflects and makes it more challenging to read the text. The charts allow students to remind each other about where to find particular words or phrases or ideas for independent writing. Additionally, when the group is made up of students of mixed writing ability, more proficient writers serve as models for other students during the interactive writing lessons. Interestingly, other students, who may have difficulty putting the pen to paper, may be more competent at providing ideas for writing and enrich the discussion during the composition of the chart. When students are at their tables or desks during independent writing, mixing the students so that more competent writers sit close to those who struggle provides additional modeling and support for less competent writers. English learners especially benefit from peer modeling and assistance. Some children do need extra instruction and small groups are beneficial in addition to the whole group interactive writing lessons. An effective way to support English learners is to teach a small group interactive writing lesson with simpler language structures prior to the whole class lesson. Another option

is to pull the English learners for a small group and encourage “talk” about the topic before the interactive writing lesson, frontloading the language that will be used in the lesson before beginning the chart. It is also helpful for English learners to review the whole group chart with the teacher following the whole class lesson to reinforce language, comprehension, and reading strategies.

When complete, the whole group interactive writing chart is placed on the wall as a record of learning. Often the teacher guides the students in “reading the walls” as one of the daily opening tasks. As each chart is read, re-teaching or new teaching takes place as needed. Reading fluency is a characteristic of proficient readers. Reading connected text with smoothness and ease allows the student to attend to the meaning of the text. Repeated readings reduce attention at the word or word part level. The research is clear that good readers read much more than poor readers and because of the difference, the gap increases each year (Allington, 2005). Revisiting the interactive writing charts is one way to increase the amount of reading students do in primary classrooms.

The interactive writing lesson is most appropriate for kindergarten, first, and second grade and can take from 10 to 20 minutes depending on the grade level. Students need to be trained on what the expectations are during the session. One of the most difficult areas for teachers learning to do interactive writing is keeping all the students engaged while the one student is writing at the easel. This can be a challenge because the temptation is to watch the one student write on the chart; unfortunately, the other students sitting on the floor only see the child’s back. The students quickly disengage when this occurs. For this reason, a whiteboard or Magnadoodle is handy for teaching about the word being written on the chart such as listing synonyms, making connections to other words

(in/thin/spin/spinster), or planning the next part of the text. Once the child has written the word or phrase, then the text is reread to refocus on the composition. Knowing they will be called up to write if attentive is a motivator for students to stay on task. They see their role as the teacher’s assistant, and they enjoy being a helper and a model for their peers.

Teachers need to know the English language arts standards well and to look for opportunities to teach them in the context of the lesson. Additionally, observing students during their independent writing guides the teaching plan for the next day during the group interactive writing lesson. Interactive writing is most effective when done just before students’ independent writing. The lessons and demonstrations are recent and the teacher can easily make connections between what was demonstrated and taught in interactive writing and what should be applied during the students’ independent writing.

Table 3 provides suggestions for teaching points during interactive writing sessions. Teachers must be cautious not to overdo the teaching in each short session and keep a balance between teaching skills or strategies and getting the text completed. As Clay (1995) suggests, the effective teacher strives to make “highly skilled decisions moment by moment during the lesson” (p. 9).

If what is taught in interactive writing is not transferred to independent writing, then the teacher provides more direct and explicit teaching in the following day’s group lesson and in one-on-one writing conferences with students. Students need to be reminded often of the teaching; we cannot assume children will understand and carry it over into their own writing without explicit and direct instruction or extra assistance while they are writing. At the end of the interactive lesson, the summarizes the learning and might say: “*We learned how toand I’ll be looking for it in*

your writing today.” During individual writing conferences, the teacher reminds students of what was learned in the interactive writing lesson or directs their attention to completed charts on the wall. These are helpful in providing ideas or words or as a model for a particular writing genre or a strategy previously taught.

Table 3: Possible Teaching Points During the Interactive Writing Lesson

- ◆ Model and expect students to say words slowly to listen for sounds.
- ◆ Identify initial, final, and medial sounds in words.
- ◆ Segment and blend words.
- ◆ Clap syllables in words.
- ◆ Take apart regular multisyllabic words.
- ◆ Use common word families to problem-solve unfamiliar words.
- ◆ Teach high frequency words.
- ◆ Link letter/sound or word part to the class name chart.
- ◆ Make connections to the word wall by finding a known word.
- ◆ Link to alphabet chart by finding a letter or sound.
- ◆ Practice letter formation.
- ◆ Compile lists with same vowel or consonant sounds or spelling patterns.
- ◆ Start a chart focusing needed area of learning such as phonics principle, compound words, contractions, or synonyms.
- ◆ Read for meaning: Did that make sense?
- ◆ Read with attention to language structures: Do we say it that way? Does that sound right?
- ◆ Cross-check: Let’s reread to make sure it makes sense, sounds right, and looks right.
- ◆ Self-correct: Something wasn’t quite right there; let’s see what needs to be fixed.

At the end of the school day, the teacher reviews the students’ independent writing looking for reasons to “celebrate” writing the

next day before students begin their independent writing. These public “celebrations” become reminders of what has been taught and how children are incorporating it in their writing. Often children become inspired to try a new skill or strategy in their own writing hoping to be “celebrated” next time. The observant teacher looks for these opportunities on a daily basis during independent writing. The celebration can be focused on completed texts or on texts in progress.

Letter Formation

Letter-sound knowledge is a byproduct of rich early literacy experiences and when taught in context, children are more likely to use that knowledge to understand the alphabetic principle and apply it to reading and writing (Adams, 1990; Clay, 1993; Snow et al., 1998). To write, children must pay attention to the distinctive features of letters that make any one letter different from others. Difficulties with letter formation place the earliest constraints on writing development (Clay, 1997; Graham, 2009). For some young children, the thought process and physical task of forming letters interferes with other writing processes. If the subroutine of letter formation can be automatized, then attention is freed up to generate language at the word, sentence, and text level (Berninger et al., 1997; Graham, 2009). According to Clay (1993), learning to produce letters in text is more significant than being able to name the symbol of the alphabet or give their sounds. She states, “...before a child can attach a sound to a letter symbol, he has first of all to be able to see the letter symbol as an individual entity different from other symbols” (p. 266). Learning to write a letter while attending to what makes it different from other letters contributes to discriminations that support directional learning needed for becoming a reader and a writer.

During the interactive writing lesson, the teacher anticipates those tricky letters before

having them recorded on the interactive writing chart. Teachers may use a large Magnadoodle or a whiteboard to model the easily confused letter before the child writes it and has the whole group practice saying the letter formation “words” to facilitate remembering which direction to move. When forming the letter “d” for example, the teacher might say, “around, up, and down” as she models and then has the students form the letter in the air saying those same words. They use their index or “magic finger” to form the letter in large strokes to feel the shape and notice its details. Helping young writers to correctly and efficiently form their letters frees them up to attend to other aspects of writing. Inefficient or incorrect letter formation gets in the way of fluent writing. It is useful to have a consistent routine for producing each letter that utilizes simple, but concise language making it easier to remember as the teacher practices with the students (Clay, 1995). This language is used to guide the children to say, see, and move as they form the letter in the air.

Words

The teacher’s role during independent writing should not be that of a walking spelling dictionary for students. Encouraging children to say the word they want to write slowly, to hear the sequence of sounds, and to try to write the word fosters independence. Children soon realize there are alternative ways of getting to new words that do not depend on memorizing spelling or asking the teacher how to write a word. Additionally, as they observe the teacher during demonstrations of spelling strategies during interactive writing, their skill in segmenting the sounds and making letter/sound connections becomes stronger. Going from sounds to letters is easier for the child than letters to sounds (Clay, 1993). The first is done in a meaningful, authentic writing task that makes sense to the child. The second is often done in isolation which makes it more difficult for the child to apply to reading or writing.

Allowing for approximations in their spelling also encourages independence as the child can move on with the writing process. The teacher or other students can help later with spelling strategies or resources for finding needed words.

There are words that need to become sight words because they appear frequently in reading and are often needed in writing. These words can be taught during the interactive writing lesson as they come up. Not only are these core words necessary, but they are also needed by the child to generate other words. Clay (1993) asserts that, “As the core of known words builds in writing, and the high frequency words become known, these provide a series from which other words can be composed taking familiar bits from known words and getting to new words by analogy” (p. 244).

The teacher shows the children the new word as she slowly writes each sound. The children then practice “writing” it in the air and on the rug several times. When the word taught comes up again, it is reviewed in this multisensory way. Multiple exposures through repeated readings and opportunities to practice writing the new word increases familiarity. As the word is read over and over, it becomes more solid.

When students are ready to generate new words from known words, this is demonstrated on a whiteboard or Magadoodle or with magnetic letters showing how changing a part of a known word can generate new words (can/candy, see/trees, out/cloud). Once again, the teacher must demonstrate how this is a problem-solving strategy children is useful for reading and writing.

Reading the Room

A classroom with interactive writing charts displayed around the room surrounds children with meaningful and authentic print. These

charts become resources for interactive writing lessons as the teacher and students make connections to previous learning related to a topic or to a word, letter, or cluster of letters.

Student names are useful when learning how words work. They contain common patterns found in many words. A classroom name chart serves to link sounds with letters or clusters of letters. The teacher provides clear demonstrations in how to use the name chart to find needed letters, sounds, or word parts for writing. Kindergarten begins with a chart with students' first names. Gradually the chart is replaced with one listing first and last names. In first and second grade a chart with students' first, middle, and last names provides most all the letter patterns found in words. Placing these charts close to the area where interactive writing lessons take place makes it easy for the teacher to demonstrate a link between a words needed in writing to a part in a name (Wiley, 1998).

A word wall (Cunningham, 1995) placed strategically near the interactive writing area allows further connections in finding known high frequency words or using these words to teach phonics through analogy ("See' has the double 'ee' that we need in the word 'keep.'"). As new high frequency words are learned, they are added to the word wall at that time. Reading the room, a few charts each day, allows for more teaching opportunities and solidifies students' word knowledge.

The reciprocity of reading and writing is clearly demonstrated when pools of knowledge in reading and writing are linked through teacher demonstrations (Clay, 1993). The classroom displays of interactive writing charts become clear records of related learning experiences in the interactive writing sessions useful to the students as they read and write.

Conclusion

Writing is a complex process for children. A class environment, which creates the assumption that children will write, will have writers. Interactive writing is an example of one powerful means of fostering exploration of print and the writing process. This group writing experience is an intermediary tool that leads to independent young writers with teacher demonstrations and explicit teaching. Children experience the joy of composing text that is meaningful and authentic. In the process of writing it down, they learn skills and strategies essential to becoming proficient readers and writers.

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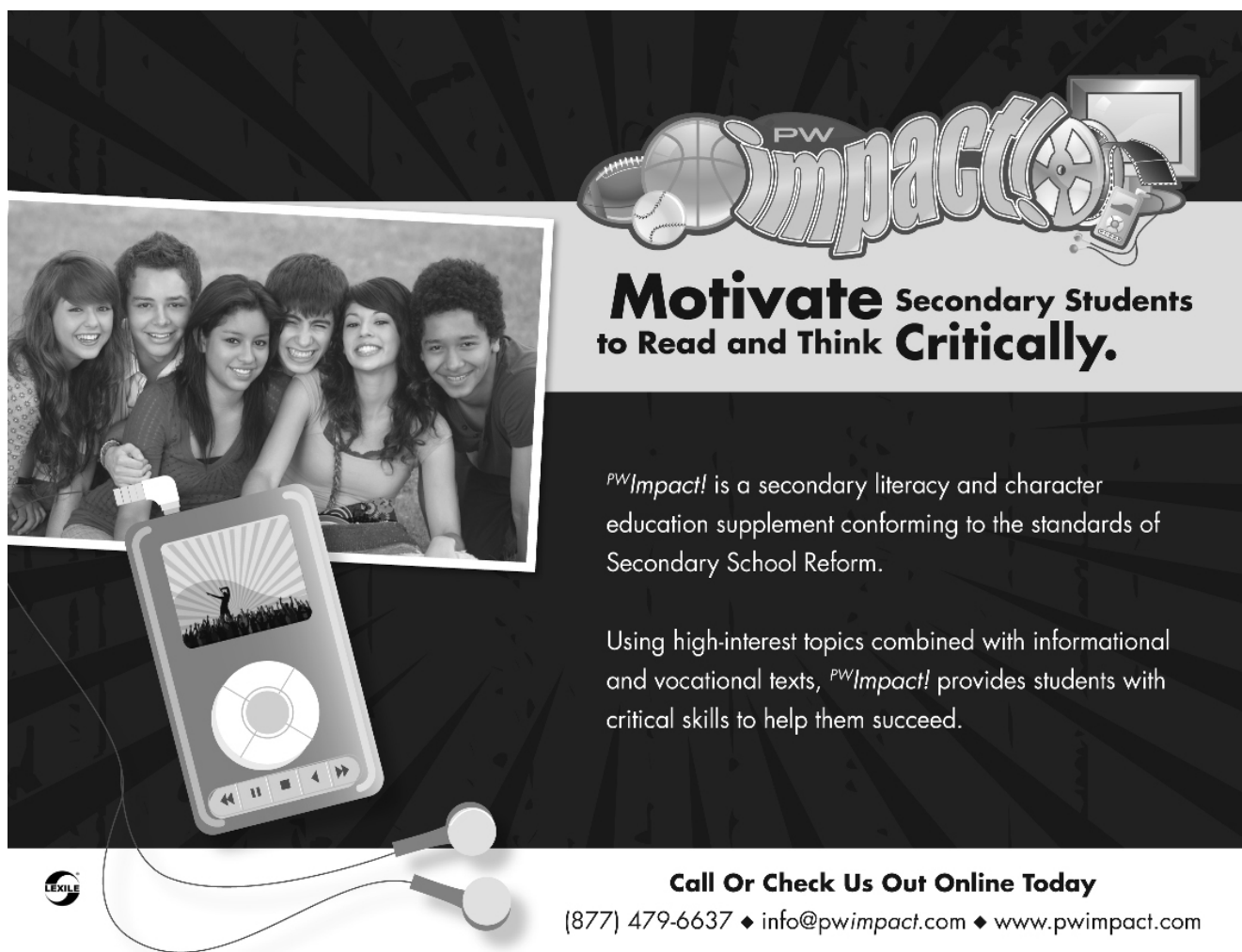
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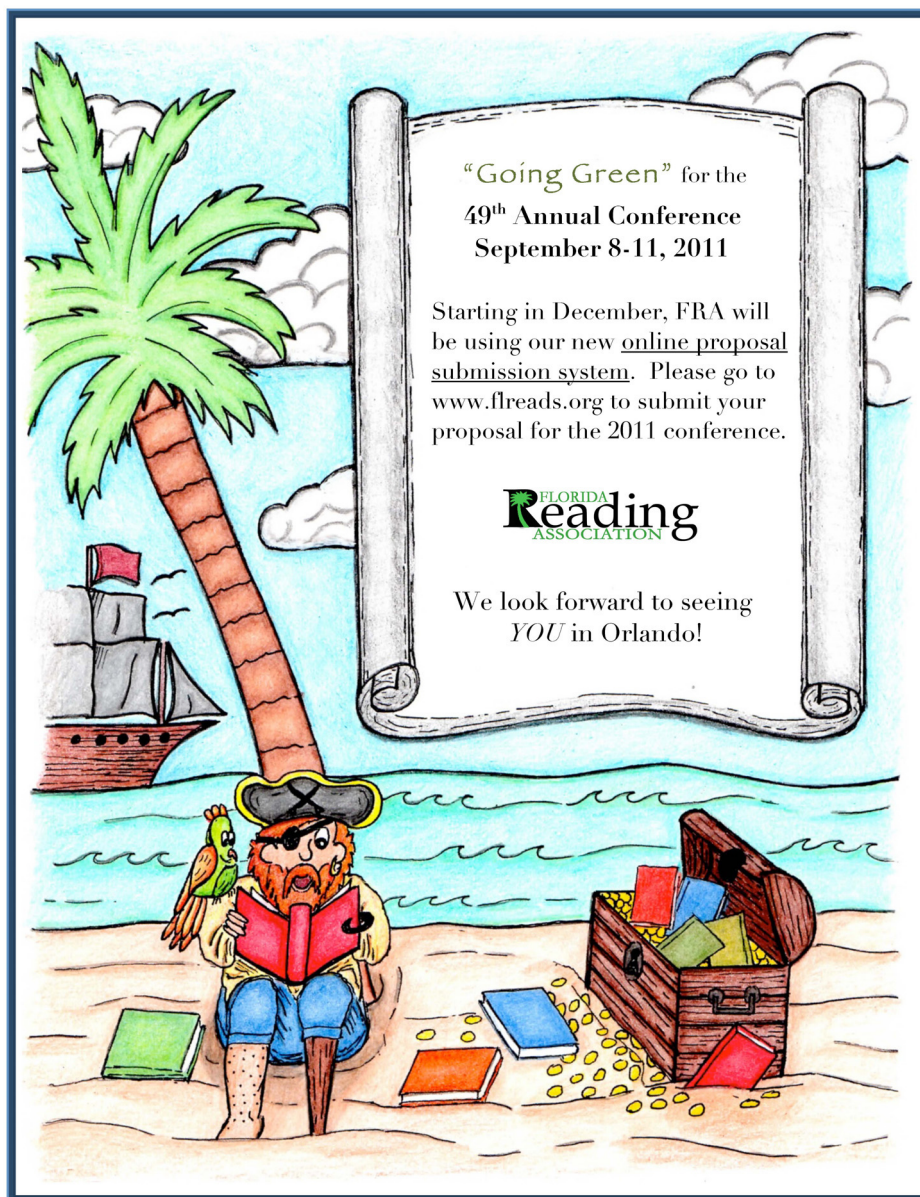
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Using Storytelling to Teach Science and Social Studies

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Abstract: In this article, the authors describe the benefits of using storytelling to teach science and social studies and ways to incorporate it with content literacy instruction.

Introduction

How can storytelling and literacy relate to the study of science and social studies? According to Bickmore and Grandy, (2005, p. 1) "Science is the modern art of *creating stories* that explain observations of the natural world and that could be useful for controlling or predicting nature." Science and storytelling constitute a natural pair, for science is the story of the world (Ellis, 1997). This article summarizes the benefits of using storytelling to teach science and social studies and then describes ways in which teachers can incorporate it with content literacy instruction.

Using storytelling to teach literacy, science and social studies is counter-intuitive to the viewpoint that "the first thing that comes to mind when considering science and its relationship to storytelling is that the former has nothing to do with the latter" (Hadzigeorgiou & Stefanich, 2000, p. 23). With parents, teachers, administrators, and other educational stakeholders operating under this misconception, students in the U.S. are being deprived of a valuable learning tool that might help them make achievement gains in science and social studies.

The Need for Improvement in Science and Social Studies Achievement

As a whole, the nation's science and social studies test scores are lower than educators, parents, and policy makers would like these scores to be. According to the Florida Center for Research in Science, Technology & Mathematics (2010), less than half of fifth graders in Florida scored in the average range or above (44% scored a level 3, 4, or 5 in 2006-2008) on the science portion of the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test (FCAT). Only 12% of fifth grade students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) scored in the average range or above in science. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2010), only about one in four of American fourth grade students, about 24%, scored at or above the *Proficient* level, meaning they demonstrated competency over challenging subject material in social studies.

Subject areas such as science and social studies have not been emphasized in the last decade partially because of the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB, 2002) According to Au (2009), NCLB places so much emphasis on reading and math testing that many schools are reducing the amount of social studies instruction that they offer. For instance, in a survey of almost 1,000 principals across four K-5 schools with high minority populations,

47% of the respondents reported decreases in the teaching of social studies.

Teachers often do not have the time necessary to cover science and social studies sufficiently as they are required by administrators to focus on teaching reading and math. Over the last five years, the authors have taught and observed in schools where twenty minutes a day were allotted for teaching science and social studies combined. Curricular content that is not included in high stakes testing may be neglected. Teachers enter the field with a view of what the classroom atmosphere will be like, only to find out that their beliefs about best practices for teaching are challenged and often dismissed. Worksheets and high-stakes practice tests sometimes take the place of productive collaborative group work, projects, and hands-on learning experiences.

With an intense focus on high stakes testing results, students whose cultural traditions are not part of the dominant culture may be neglected due to lack of time. Their cultural values, beliefs, and learning styles may not be incorporated into the current state of the education system to the extent that they should be.

Au (2009) emphasizes:

The relative control of social studies instruction exerted through high-stakes tests raises significant issues for social justice education because the tests systematically push multicultural subject matter out of school curriculum because the tests do not include multicultural knowledge as important, valuable knowledge. (p. 53)

Benefits of Storytelling

Most science and social studies content texts are currently in nonfiction format. Through the use of storytelling, teachers have an opportunity to help students gain deeper understandings of science and social studies

curriculum in a format that is familiar to them. When listening to a storyteller or engaging in storytelling themselves, students are able to take ownership of their learning. They are able to learn and use content vocabulary to demonstrate their comprehension of the topic. Students can make deeper connections with the experience of storytelling and become engaged and interested in learning.

Storytelling has been used for thousands of years to teach science and social studies lessons to children. Since the days of ancient Greece, people have told stories to explain weather and natural disasters. For example, the story of Apollo riding his chariot across the sky was used by the Greeks to explain the rising and setting of the sun (Bickmore & Grandy, 2005). Stories have been passed down through the ages, and storytellers have taught their children about science, social studies and based their way of life upon these traditional tales. Hadzigeorgiou and Stefanich (2000) observed that the scientific theory that is used to explain, for example, the connection between volcanoes, earthquakes, and mountains is rooted in the myth of the Titans.

Without the stories of science and social studies woven throughout the history of human life, how would we know who we are, how we connect to our ancestors, how would we start to understand our world? “Stories inform us of our past, support our present, and shape our future. Stories validate who we are” (Harris, 2007, p. 111). If teachers deny students access to the integration of storytelling into the science and social studies curriculum, they are denying students access to an age-old tradition that has shaped the human culture.

When paired with science and social studies content, storytelling can provide opportunities for student learning, engagement, and achievement. Comprehension and vocabulary development can improve when teachers incorporate storytelling into the classroom (Groce, 2004). The integration of storytelling

and science can strengthen the learning process and language development (Redmond, 2000). A plethora of skills are being strengthened when students are engaged in telling or listening to stories.

Although teachers must be careful in how they spend valuable classroom time and must by necessity get students ready for state tests, storytelling can be productively incorporated into classrooms. It can be used as a strategy to cover necessary content while creating students' engagement. Benefits to incorporating storytelling into the classroom include improving reading skills in content areas such as science and social studies. Storytelling is helpful in activating students' background knowledge, with special benefits for English language learners. This strategy helps students develop vocabulary and oral language skills needed for academic achievement (Groe, 2004; Harris, 2007).

Students who have personal connections to their learning are more likely to retain the information and remain engaged in the learning process. Students need the opportunity to make necessary connections to the content in order to gain deep and meaningful understandings of the world around them. Students discover how to use their background knowledge to integrate new ideas into their schema. This is especially important for English language learners, who may be already at a disadvantage when learning science and social studies content, due to the specific English vocabulary involved in these subject areas.

By incorporating storytelling into the sciences, teachers are able to meet the needs of many diverse learners and encourage students who have not achieved previously in this subject to become engaged. Some group members, such as girls and African Americans, have shown a more positive response to content that is humanized in story format, according to Moore-Hart, Liggitt and Daisey (2004). If

teachers knew that something as simple as incorporating storytelling into the content areas might reach these groups of students, then they might try this strategy in their classrooms.

Using storytelling to teach science and social studies will also help to create a sense of community within the classroom. When students are encouraged to incorporate their cultures, values, beliefs, and traditions into their storytelling in the content areas, they gain an understanding and appreciation for each other and their own uniqueness. Students see that they are valued and validated by the teacher and their peers. If students feel that they are able to take accepted and valued in their classrooms, they will be more likely to take risks and push themselves to convey what they know about certain topics in new and creative ways. After all, "the real essence of science is *storytelling*-creatively making up stories to explain what we observe in the natural world" (Bickmore & Grandy, 2005, p. 1).

Ways Teachers can Incorporate Storytelling with Content Literacy Instruction

Blending narratives is the strategy where students combine their understanding of content knowledge and their own personal experiences to tell a story (Ellis, 1997; Harris, 2007; Affinito, 2010). Students make connections to the content while developing key literacy skills and internalizing content area knowledge. When teachers show students that they value both forms of stories, content knowledge and students' personal experiences, they empower their students to use their voices in creative ways to prove their understanding.

Teachers can use the textbook stories to guide students in interpreting new knowledge into personal narratives (Ellis, 1997; Harris, 2007; Affinito, 2010). The use of brainstorming as a whole group to get ideas flowing is a good beginning. This is followed by classroom

webbing, where the teacher writes key terms on the board from the specific content of the lesson and then students' are asked to write personal connections on the board under each key term. Next, students are encouraged to create a story map that integrates their personal connections and the content. Lastly, students create and present oral stories that demonstrate their understanding of the content topic. This strategy is a great way for students to use their imaginations and background experiences to connect to the content.

For a detailed manual of how to use the blended storytelling narrative for teaching ecology see Brian "Fox" Ellis's (1997) book, *Learning from the Land* (available electronically on Kindle). There are numerous ways that teachers can incorporate storytelling into the science and social studies curriculum. One type of story that lends itself nicely to the elementary science curriculum is the 'pourquoi' (why) tale (Redmond, 2000; Stanley & Dillingham, 2009) There are a variety of these tales that are available in school libraries, such as *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* (1992) by Verda Aardema. Pourquoi tales use stories to explain the natural world. The stories were once oral tales passed down from generation to generation and have since been written down in hopes of being preserved for future generations to enjoy. Students can easily create pourquoi tales to describe science phenomena. They will use their imaginations and the content to show their knowledge of how the world works. There are some examples of pourquoi stories provided in the list of websites in Appendix A.

Additional ideas for how teachers can incorporate storytelling into the science and social studies curriculum follow (see Table 1). A detailed example of how to incorporate storytelling into the classroom is provided in Appendix B, along with additional resources for implementing the lesson in Appendix C and D.

Table 1: *Lesson Ideas* (Adapted from Stanley, 2004; Stanley & Dillingham, 2009)

Science	Social Studies
Folktales (focus on nature)	Creation myths from around the world
Write transformation tales incorporating real facts about animals (behavior, habitat, physical attributes).	Tell or listen to stories that show the way of life, customs, and beliefs of an area or ethnic group.
Incorporate stories into the curriculum that explain the why and how of the earth's formation.	Use stories that have geographical details in the setting.
World habitats described in folktales (jungles, deserts, mountains, meadows, etc.).	Use stories that are based on historical events.
Folktales about any animal. (bear stories, snake stories, fish stories, etc.).	Use biographical stories.
Tales can express the interconnectedness, or ecology, of all things. How are cause and effect relationships expressed in folktales?	Star Lore: The folklore of the night sky.
Incorporate science content into different forms of poetry such as "found" and list poems.	World myths and legends of the sea and its creatures.
	Attributes of animals portrayed in fables: Compare how those same animals behave in nature vs. in folklore.
	The folklore of flowers.
	Incorporate social studies content into different forms of poetry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, science and social studies instruction may benefit from using storytelling as a classroom strategy. Students' rich history and knowledge about the world around us has become neglected and students are suffering for it. Students should be encouraged to use storytelling to understand complex concepts and issues facing our world. They will gain a deeper, more meaningful understanding of the topics, feel culturally validated, and improve their literacy skills all at the same time. "The beauty of storytelling is that in addition to

helping develop language and creativity, it requires a knowledge of a variety of topics to make the story ‘come to life’” (Redmond, 2000, p. 48). Storytelling is an easy way for teachers to teach science and social studies content and at the same time meet the needs of the diverse learners across America.

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Appendix A

Useful Websites

Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site

<http://www.carolhurst.com/subjects/curriculum.html>

List of fiction and nonfiction children's books by science and social studies topics.

Storytelling Across the Curriculum

<http://www.storyarts.org/lessonplans/acrosscurriculum/index.html>

How to incorporate storytelling into the content areas.

Creative Educator

http://www.thecreativeeducator.com/v05/stories/Digital_Storytelling_Across_the_Curriculum

Why storytelling is beneficial to students and ways to incorporate storytelling into the content areas.

Ideas for Digital Storytelling Across the Curriculum

<http://www.techteachers.com/digstory/ideas.htm>

How to incorporate storytelling into science and social studies.

Teaching with Pourquoi Tales

<http://goo.gl/CIX3U>

Animal pourquoi tales and how to incorporate them into the classroom.

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Appendix B

Grades: 3-5, Lesson Example:

Below is an example of an Experience, Reflect and Apply (ERA) mini lesson incorporating storytelling and science based on the performance literacy approach developed by Stanley and Dillingham (2009).

Experience:

1. Teacher reads aloud *Thunder Cake* by Patricia Polacco (1997)
See author website for teaching variations:
http://www.patriciapolacco.com/books/thundercake/thundercake_index.html
2. Teacher reads aloud *Storms* by Seymour Simon (1992)
<http://www.seymoursimon.com/>

Reflect:

1. Create a Venn diagram on the board and have students make one in their journals.
2. Have students identify key elements of the fiction read aloud with a partner filling the left half of the Venn diagram in their journals. Students share and fill in class diagram on board.
3. Students then identify key elements of the nonfiction read aloud with a partner, filling in the right half of the Venn diagram in their journals. Students share and fill in class diagram on board.
4. Teacher guide a discussion to what the two have in common, coming up with a list of things that should be in a blended narrative. Use the Sample Genre Chart in Appendix D as a visual aid to summarize key points.

Apply:

1. Students brainstorm and write their own blended narrative about one aspect of a thunderstorm, either individually or in groups. Use the Criteria Checklist in Appendix C to evaluate the students' blended narrative.
2. Students publish stories, including illustrations.
3. Students perform their stories for the class incorporating props, movement, and expression.



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Appendix C

Sample Genre Chart

<u>Fiction Elements</u>	<u>Blending Fiction and Nonfiction</u>	<u>Nonfiction Elements</u>
Beginning, middle, and end Details Characters Setting Problems and solutions Title and author Interesting	Beginning, middle, and end Characters Setting Problems and solutions Details Important facts Learn information	Introduction, body, and conclusion Details Title and author Important facts Learn information

Source: Affinito, S. (2010). Blending fiction and nonfiction to improve comprehension and writing skills. *ReadWriteThink*. Retrieved from <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/blending-fiction-nonfiction-improve-262.html?tab=4#tabs>

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Appendix D

Name _____

Date _____

Criteria Checklist

Use this checklist as a way to focus your writing and to be sure that you have done your very best work. After you have completed your draft, reread your writing piece and check to be sure you have included all of the elements.

Narrative Elements

- ☐ Does your writing piece have a beginning, middle, and end?
- ☐ Does your writing piece have a well-described setting?
- ☐ Does your writing piece have well-developed characters?

Expository Elements

- ☐ Does your writing piece include information about a topic?
- ☐ Does your writing piece include at least five facts or pieces of information on the topic?
- ☐ Can your facts or pieces of information be proved in a reference source?

Writing Mechanics

- ☐ Did you check your writing piece for spelling mistakes?
- ☐ Did you check your writing piece for capitalization and punctuation?
- ☐ Did you check your writing piece for correct paragraphing?

Overall

- ☐ Does your writing piece “flow”—meaning that the fiction and nonfiction elements fit nicely together, so your writing is not choppy?

Source: Affinito, S. (2010). Blending fiction and nonfiction to improve comprehension and writing skills. *ReadWriteThink*. Retrieved from <http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/blending-fiction-nonfiction-improve-262.html?tab=4#tabs>

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Technology: Technolust: iDevices for Children's Reading

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Perhaps you've seen some of the nifty tech devices in airports, coffee houses, or with people using them in restaurants while working with others at their table, and you thought "*I want that.*" Ah, you have **technolust**. Right now it's Apple's iPad, iPhone, and iTouch, but soon there will be other such tablet devices (I read of at least five other companies ramping up to make their own). But maybe you have been saying to yourself, "I shouldn't get something like that, what could I do with it? It's not like I could use it with my students. Sure, it might be good for older students, but not for elementary." If you have been thinking along these lines, then you're wrong. These oh-so-cool devices, like ebook readers and small touch pads, can indeed be wonderful tools to help students read and learn, and not just middle and high school students either. Scholastic just completed a study and found that sixty percent of 9 to 17 year olds are interested in reading on an electronic device (like a Kindle or iPad), and 33%t said they would read more for fun, if they could read on a digital device (Italie, 2010).

Have you ever seen a preschooler play with an iPhone or iPad? It's actually amazing what they can, and will, do with no instruction; these devices are the Gameboy, dolly or, perhaps, the car keys of previous generations. Children today are not afraid of such devices, instead they take to these new devices with their multitouch screen interface, as all things Pokémon did to an earlier "generation." Two-thirds of early elementary children have already used an iPhone or iTouch, most often as it is passed back to them in a car by the driver (Chiong & Schuler, 2010). This is the "iGeneration" - they came after the Net Generation and are named for all the "i"

devices: iPod, iPhone, iTouch, iWant . These children have developed in an environment not just with computers, but in one where, for many, technology is ubiquitous, everywhere and all the time. For these children, research has shown that multimedia activities help in their learning (Rosen, 2010) with some studies finding that children using applications based on PBS KIDS programs had a vocabulary gain of over 30% (Chiong & Schuler 2010). Children do not have to re-learn anything to go from using a mouse to a touch screen; they start with the touch screen, it's more concrete anyway, and they go from there.

Devices like the iPad or iTouch have quite a few applications (apps) that a teacher might like: gradebook integration, reading assessment tools, word processing and web searching, but, for right now, let's just consider children and books. If you haven't looked, you might be surprised what is out there. Yes, these devices were designed for adults, but with their full-color screen, interactive touch surface, motion sensors, and other advanced technology features, these tools have opened the doors for apps designed around illustrated children's literature and also expanding into interactive and multimedia formats. One thing to understand is that there are some "books" that are apps in and of themselves, and there are other apps that either create or access whole libraries/ Another thing to understand is that there are quite a few affordable apps (inexpensive or free) that are out there.



Figure 1. A few free reading and book apps downloaded to an iPad

You can access entire libraries of books using an iPad, iPhone, or iTouch.. For example the **International Children's Digital Library** (*free*) has an app for the iPad that links to a library of children's literature in 54 languages that has over 4000 books, mostly picture books. **Read Me Stories - Children's Books** (*free*), provides a different talking picture book every day. Then, there is the **iBooks** app (*free*), which provides a virtual bookshelf for you to add books to. There are literally hundreds of thousands of books that you can get for free to add to your virtual bookshelf, from picture books to chapter books. Also, there is the **Kindle** app for these devices, which will give you access to over 16,000 public domain classics at no charge, such as *Ann of Green Gables*, *The Secret Garden*, *The Jungle Book*, and *Little Women*.

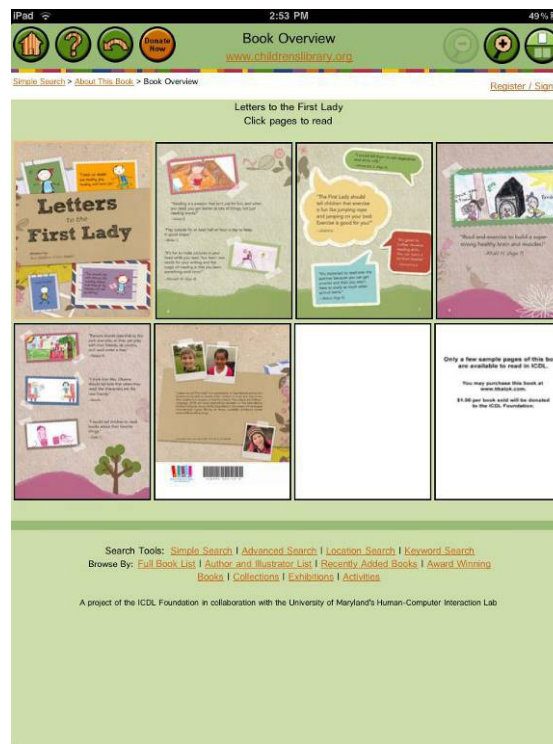


Figure 2. Book *Letters to the First Lady* from the International Children's Digital Library (<http://en.childrenslibrary.org/>)

You can get applications that allow you to access audio book libraries such as Cross Forward Consulting's **Audiobooks** (\$0.99) which allows you to listen to over 2500 public domain titles. Although for public domain books, you could go to **LibriVox's** (librivox.org) or **Project Gutenberg's** (www.gutenberg.org) children's literature collection and download books to listen with the built in MP3 player (*free*). LibriVox has audio versions of books like *the Doctor Dolittle* books, the *Oz* books, and about 50 others for children that are read by volunteers and can be downloaded and then played. If you are looking for some more current books, you might try **Tales2Go**, a fee service that costs \$3/month or \$25/year, and has selections that range from modern classics like *Stellaluna* and *Curious George Rides a Bike* to popular series and characters such as *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *How to Train Your Dragon*.

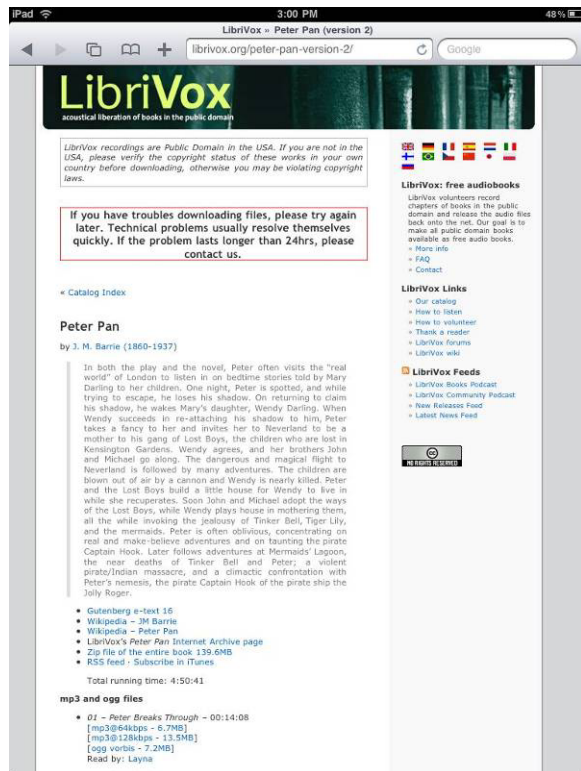


Figure 3. LibriVox's (<http://librivox.org/>) *Peter Pan* as an audiobook.

Next are the individual book apps. These are books that you get individually, not as part of a virtual library. There are apps that are novels, resource books, graphic novels, comic books, chapter books, picture books, and more. These apps have taken the flip books or pop-up book concept and made things that perhaps couldn't be imagined before. For example there is the book app *Alice*. It is quite beautiful and interactive, to the point where a picture just wouldn't do. It's hard to imagine without seeing it. In *Alice* there are things that you can pick up and move around, and then tip the iPad to make Alice shrink or grow (Alice Lite is free, full version is \$9). Another example, *Grimm's Rumpelstiltskin* is an app that creates a modern version of a traditional pop-up book. While there are no actual paper flaps to pull or push, using their devices, readers can move things around, poke characters, and even change the scene some. Another interesting adaptation on the concept of the digital book is the *Wrong Side of the Bed* (2 and 3-D), this book can be read rightsideup or upside-down as

a regular flat book or in 3-D (using red/cyan glasses). Below is a listing of just some of the more affordable quality books available:

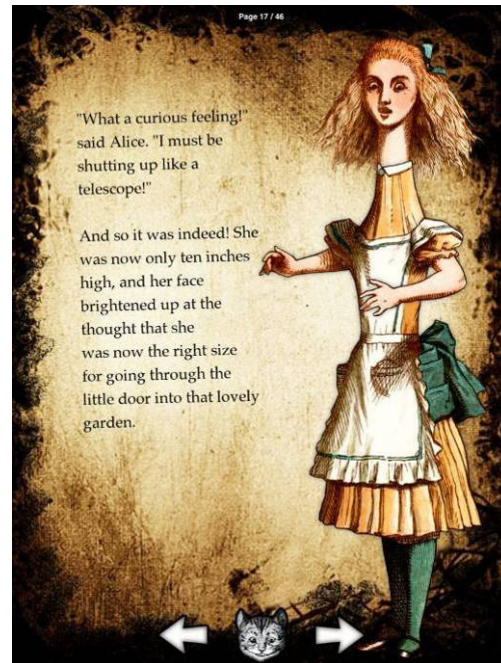


Figure 4. *Alice for the iPad* is an interactive ebook by Atomic Antelope, tilt the book to make Alice shrink or grow.



Figure 5. *Mousefish* a flipbook by Jake MacMullin.

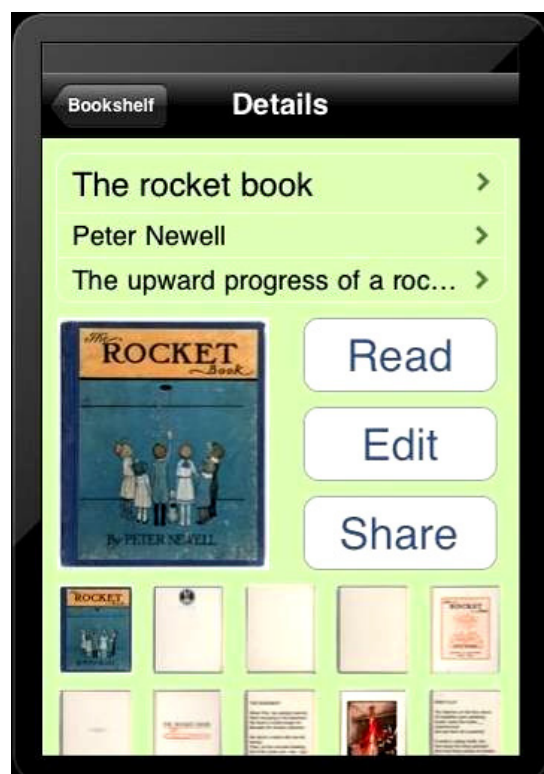


Figure 6. *StoryKit* from the International Children's Digital Library allows users to create or edit stories and add their voice reading the story.

You can browse what is available from Apple's Apps Store in the area of book by visiting <http://itunes.apple.com/us/genre/mobile-software-applications/id6018?mt=8> (or just

type in <http://goo.gl/T26yQ> if you want to use a web short cut).

So this may have inflamed your technolust or maybe you already have an iPhone or other device and now have some new ideas about using it. Either way, **happy reading**.

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Book Reviews:

Literature:

Notable Books for Children and Young Adults

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For many of us with an interest in classroom life (teachers, teacher educators, librarians, administrators, and caregivers—to name only a few), it is sometimes tempting choose literature based solely on its ability to facilitate the acquisition of literacy skills or aid in achieving pedagogical objectives. I refer to this the “appropriation of children’s literature,” because viewing children’s literature solely as a tool for teaching ignores the full power and potential of these books. With children’s and young adult literature playing increasingly prominent roles in classrooms, it is important to think about children’s literature *as literature* (Shavit, 1986; Nesbit, 1967). By this, I mean that books written for child and young adult readers merit being appreciated and discussed with the same regard as “adult” literature: treating children’s literature like *Literature*. While it is important to prepare young readers to articulate personal responses to texts, it is essential that they also be prepared to discuss the literary value of books. The books we utilize in pedagogical contexts should be both literarily and artistically exemplary and leave young people thinking—and speaking—critically.

From this perspective, then, the books selected for inclusion in “*Literature: Notable Books for Children and Young Adults*” columns will be, above all else, quality literature. The focus will be on books with nuanced characters and distinct voices, carefully developed and constructed plots, innovative formats, unique perspectives, masterful illustrations, and/or complex themes and messages.

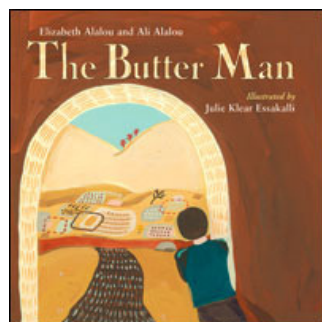
When looking for quality literature, one of the first places many of us turn is to award-winners: those books selected by industry experts as the most exemplary titles during that particular award year. So, as 2010 comes to a close, it seems fitting to look back at some of the recent, more noteworthy publications in children’s and young adult literature. Because one of the purposes of children’s and young adult literature is to teach us about ourselves and those around us, this inaugural “*Literature: Notable Books for Children and Young Adults*” column is devoted to those books that have received honors for representations of “diverse” populations. These books are often more difficult to come by than texts that win the Newbery or Caldecott Medal and, although an increasing number are being published by major imprints, these books have traditionally been published by small, independent, sometimes nonprofit presses. As a result, many of these titles receive less publicity and are often unavailable in larger book store chains. In 2010, each of the texts featured below was named as a winner or honor book for the Asian Pacific American Book Award (books that promote Asian Pacific American culture and heritage), the Coretta Scott King Book Award (for African American authors and illustrators), the Lambda Literary Award (for LGBT authors who use their work to represent LGBT lives), the Middle East Book Award (for books that contribute meaningfully to an understanding of the Middle East), the Pura Belpré Award (for Latino/a authors and illustrators who use their work to portray, celebrate, and affirm Latino/a cultural experiences), the Schneider Family Book Award (given to an author or illustrator

for artistic expressions of the disability experience), or the Sydney Taylor Book Award (books that authentically portray the Jewish experience). Although awards do not necessarily denote quality, the texts below represent some of the finest in children's publishing for the most recent award year.

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- Shavit, Z. (1986). *Poetics of children's literature*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

Book Reviews

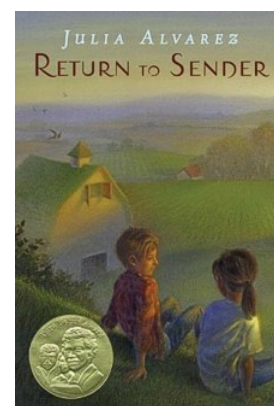


Alalou, Elizabeth, and Alalou, Ali. (2008). *The Butter Man*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

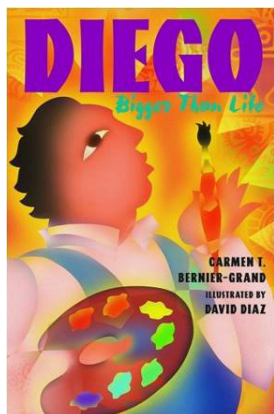
When Nora declares she is “starving” as she waits for her father to finish preparing their dinner, he tells her a story about his childhood in Morocco. He recalls a time in which his family did not have much to eat because the lack of rain resulted in small, brown, and stunted wheat crops. Eventually, the lack of food prompted his father to trek across the mountains to look for work. While he was away, the food supply continued to diminish and Nora’s father complained to his mother that he was hungry and craving butter to put on his bread. Every day, his mother instructed him to wait with his piece of bread for the Butter Man and each day, he waited—licking the bread, then nibbling it, as he tried unsuccessfully to wait for the Butter Man before consuming the only food he would receive for that day. The pieces of bread he was given got smaller and harder until finally, he was unable to even nibble it and his bread was

gone in two small bites. As it would happen, that very day, he saw a man coming down the road with a pack slung over his back and carrying a sack. Although he thought that this may be the Butter Man, it turned out that it was his father, returning with flour, vegetables, and meat from his work on a farm on the other side of the mountains. The tale Nora’s father tells reaches its conclusion just as their dinner is ready to be eaten and the family gives thanks before enjoying their meal. Julie Klear Essakalli’s gouache naïve illustrations, often in double page spreads, add to the reader’s sense of story, time, and place.

Alvarez, Julia. (2009). *Return to Sender*. New York: Yearling/Random House.



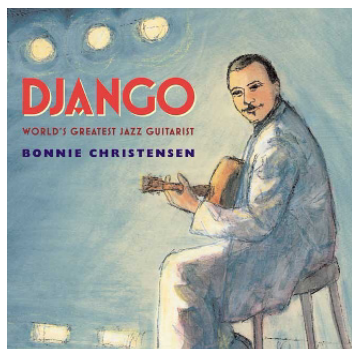
In this novel for young readers, Julia Alvarez confronts the issue of illegal immigration in the contemporary United States. Told through two voices, the text alternates between protagonists Tyler and María Dolores (called “Mari”), presenting the storyline in the form of a traditional narrative (frequently told in the present tense) and epistolary novel (letters and diary entries). Tyler Paquette is a young man whose family is struggling to retain their family farm in Vermont after a tractor accident leaves his father injured, his brother prepares to leave for college, and the untimely death of his grandfather. Mari and her parents and uncles were born in Mexico and are in the United States illegally, but her two younger sisters are American citizens. Her family moves from North Carolina to Vermont in order to work on the Paquette family farm, but things soon become complicated as the protagonists must face and interrogate the difficult concepts of immigration, borders, and citizenship.



Bernier-Grand, Carmen T. (2008). *Diego: Bigger than Life*. White Plains, NY: Marshall Cavendish Children.

When a book is illustrated by an artist as powerful as David Diaz, there is a danger that the words will be overshadowed by the

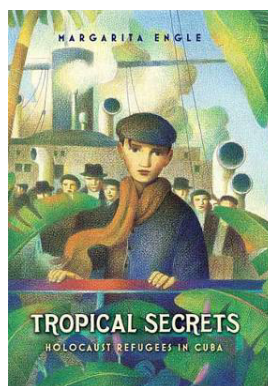
illustrations. This is not the case for Carmen T. Bernier-Grand's text in this biography of artist Diego Rivera. It isn't that Diaz's mixed media paintings are not exemplary, but Bernier-Grand's free verse poetry holds its own, grounding her representation of Rivera's life in source material (and providing extensive notes at the back of the text). Told in the first person from Rivera's point of view, the depiction of his life is presented as Rivera himself may have told it, complete with embellishments. Bernier-Grand includes a detailed author's note at the end of the text which attempts to delineate between the facts of Rivera's life and the myths he told about his experiences. This chronological biography traces Rivera's life from birth to death, highlighting many of his major artistic contributions. By tackling subjects like his membership in the Communist party, his multiple marriages and affairs (including relationships with Angelina Beloff, Guadalupe "Lupe" Marin, and Frida Kahlo), and his self-doubt and inner turmoil, Rivera emerges as a complex man who lived a tumultuous life.



Christensen, Bonnie. (2009). *Django: World's Greatest Jazz Guitarist*. New York: Roaring Book Press.

Author-illustrator

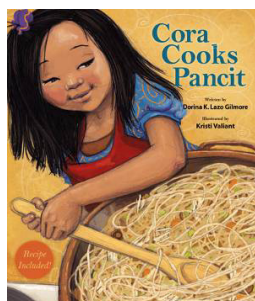
Bonnie Christensen's episodic picturebook biography of Roma jazz musician Django Reinhardt utilizes poetry to tell the story of the famed guitarist's childhood and early life. The book begins in Belgium, where the musician is born on January 23, 1910. Christensen depicts Reinhardt's difficult childhood as he moves from country to country, but highlights his joy in hunting or fishing for meat as well as in the evenings spent dancing and singing with his community. Reinhardt moves to Paris where he earns money by playing music on street corners or in dance halls and by writing music and making records. When a wagon fire leaves his leg and hand badly injured, it is assumed that Reinhardt will never play his guitar again. After months of recovery, he begins working his left hand, finding a new way to play his guitar and simultaneously creating a unique sound. Christensen's biography ends with Reinhardt playing music for those in his community and with the promise that his story is only just beginning and that a bright future in the music industry awaits him. An overview of Django Reinhardt's career, notes on the Roma, some facts of interest, a bibliography, and selected discography supplement the text.



Engle, Margarita. (2009). *Tropical Secrets: Holocaust Refugees in Cuba*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.

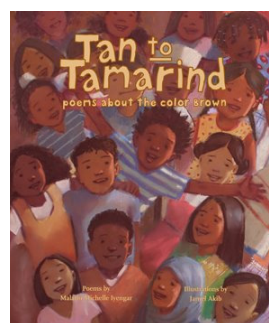
This novel in verse depicts stories of life in Cuba during the Second World War. Told in alternating perspectives, much of the narrative focuses on the experiences of Daniel, a young Jewish refugee from Germany whose parents saved enough money to purchase a ticket for their son on a boat headed for the Americas, hoping he may find safety. The family has promised to reunite after the war, meeting at the base of the Statue of Liberty. The second most prominent voice in

the novel is that of Paloma, a young Cuban girl whose father is a corrupt politician, selling visas to the refugees who can afford his price for sanctuary. Paloma befriends Daniel while working behind her father's back, providing aid to the refugees. As suspicion about non-Jewish German refugees grows in Cuba, Daniel and Paloma are faced with difficult decisions that leave them questioning principles like trust, faith, honesty, and fairness.



Gilmore, Dorina K. Lazo. (2009). *Cora Cooks Pancit*. Walnut Creek, CA: Shen's Books.

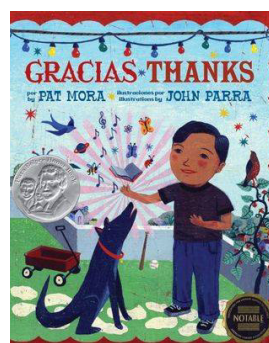
Cora enjoys the smells of her mother's Filipino dishes, but is tired of being relegated to "kid's jobs" while her older siblings are allowed to contribute more substantively to the preparation of the meals. One day, her brother and sisters are out of the house and Mama agrees to let Cora help her prepare a dish of her choice. Cora considers lumpia and adobo, before determining that pancit would be the meal she helps her mother create. As Mama wraps her red apron around Cora, she reveals that it once belonged to Cora's grandfather, who wore it when he came to California and prepared meals for the Filipino farmworkers employed to pick strawberries and grapes in the fields. The story weaves elements of family history into the narrative while describing the process of Cora's first attempt at preparing pancit with her mother. Kristi Valiant's illustrations are indispensable in their extension of the text, adding to the "personalities" of the various characters in the story and helping to bring Cora and her family members to life. The warm colors and use of line add to the feelings of love, happiness, and togetherness inspired by the text. Although the book could contribute to a "Four F's" approach to multiculturalism (food, folklore, fashion, fun), as part of a balanced collection of texts depicting Filipino Americans, this book is an attractive addition.



Iyengar, Malathi Michelle. (2009). *Tan to Tamarind: Poems about the Color Brown*. San Francisco, CA: Children's Book Press.

In an author's note, poet Malathi Michelle

Iyengar shares her experiences as a young child in North Carolina, tormented by children at her bus stop who made fun of her for having brown skin. She recalls wishing she had "peachy-pink" skin and sitting in the bathtub, hoping she could scrub away the brown of her own skin. As she grew older, Iyengar learned to have pride in her appearance and through this collection of original poems, she seeks to instill a sense of self-pride in those with brown skin, tamarind skin, sandalwood skin, ocher skin, or any of the fifteen shades about which she writes. To quote the final poem in the picturebook, Iyengar demonstrates some of the ways in which readers may conclude, "I am brown. I am beautiful." The poems are embedded within double page illustration spreads created by Jamel Akib; the illustrations and text come together and achieve a unity that contributes to the book's effectiveness as a celebration of many shades of the color brown.

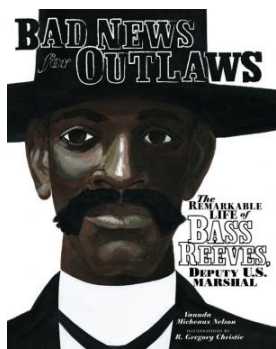


Mora, Pat. (2009). *Gracias/Thanks*. New York: Lee & Low Books, Inc.

Written in both Spanish and English, Pat Mora's *Gracias/Thanks* is told from the perspective of a young boy who appears, in John Parra's bright and colorful naïve illustrations, to have a Caucasian mother and Latino father (he is also identified as multiracial in peritextual elements). The book is a simple account of a range of things for which the protagonist is thankful, but Mora's

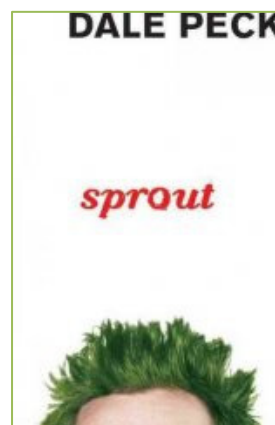
skill as an author allows her to present this tale while avoiding the triteness with which similar books often suffer. The lyrical prose is almost poetry as the young boy recounts various things for which he is grateful, always ending his statements with a simple, "thanks." From his mother who finds his homework and Abuelita who sneaks him a dollar when no one is looking to the bees that didn't sting him, the things for which the protagonist is grateful are simultaneously commonplace and extraordinary.

Nelson, Vaunda Micheaux. (2009). *Bad News for Outlaws: The Remarkable Life of Bass Reeves, Deputy U.S. Marshal*. Minneapolis, MN: Carolhoda Books.



This interpretive picturebook biography of Bass Reeves reads almost like a tall tale, using folksy language and western words to highlight the subject's bravery, honesty, and skill. Vaunda Micheaux Nelson has created an authentic biography of Reeves, where even the dialogue in the book is based on documented sources (listed in a bibliography in the back of the book, along with an author's note, timeline, glossary, and list of websites and further readings). Born into slavery around 1838, Bass is depicted as sharp and good-natured with a skill for working with animals and a fascination with weapons and criminals. One evening, under unclear circumstances, Bass strikes his owner and flees to Indian Territory where he hides until the end of the Civil War. He marries and subsequently builds a home near Indian Territory and, in 1875, is hired by Judge Isaac C. Parker as one of two hundred deputy marshals charged with tracking down outlaws in what would become the state of Oklahoma. He stays in the position of deputy U.S. marshal for thirty-two years, until the day Oklahoma becomes a state, arresting more than three

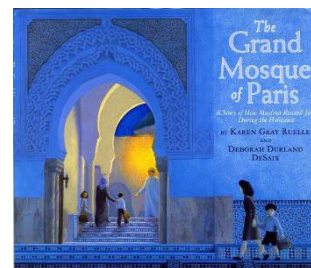
thousand men and women (including his own son). After Oklahoma achieves statehood, Bass works for the Muskogee police force until he falls ill and passes away in 1910. R. Gregory Christie's impressionistic illustrations span each of the pages, sometimes in full and double-page spreads, bringing the reader directly into the heart of this remarkable piece of nonfiction.



Peck, Dale. (2009). *Sprout*. New York: Bloomsbury.

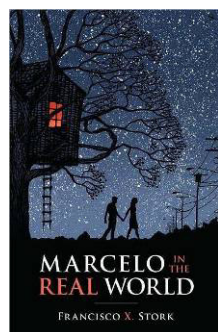
Dale Peck's adolescent novel *Sprout* primarily explores the identity development of its complicated sixteen-year-old protagonist, Daniel "Sprout" Bradford, a young male who recently moved with his father from Long Island to Kansas. Under the tutelage of a dedicated English teacher, Sprout prepares to participate in a state writing competition and, in the process, begins to confront his feelings surrounding his mother's recent death from cancer, his father's battle with alcoholism, and the difficulties of growing up—specifically, of growing up gay—in a small town in Kansas. As the writing competition draws near, the difficulties surrounding his developing relationship with Ty (a young man struggling to come to terms with his own sexual identity, coping with the death of his twin brother, and surviving his father's abuse) change Sprout's life dramatically and threaten to jeopardize much of what he has worked to achieve.

Ruelle, Karen Gray and DeSaix, Deborah Durland. (2009). *The Grand Mosque of Paris: A Story of How Muslims Rescued*



Jews During the Holocaust. New York: Holiday House.

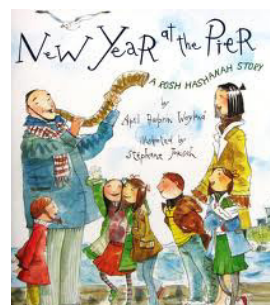
Built in 1926, the Grand Mosque of Paris was established to give thanks to the Muslim soldiers who fought for France during World War I. The mosque served both as a place of worship and a community center; any Muslim could turn to the mosque when (s)he was in need. This nonfiction picturebook, based on films, personal interviews, and the dearth of available archival evidence, describes little-known events which took place in the mosque between 1940 and 1944. During the Nazi occupation of France, Nazi and Vichy police arrested Jewish individuals and deported them to concentration camps, but the rector, Si Kaddour Benghabrit, and people of the mosque sheltered Jews and escaped prisoners of war, provided falsified documentation of Muslim identity, and worked with the Kabyle Resistance to smuggle individuals from the mosque to the river Seine via miles of underground tunnels known as the souterrain. The author-illustrators created oil paint illustrations (using brushes, paper towels, and their fingers) that encompass each two page spread and heighten the feelings of intensity and danger conveyed in the text.



Stork, Francisco X. (2009). *Marcelo in the Real World*. New York: Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Books.

Protagonist Marcelo Sandoval is feeling content with his life: he is about to enter his senior year at a private school he loves, has a coveted summer job training therapeutic-riding ponies, and makes a little extra money working with a doctor who studies his brain patterns. His feelings of security are disrupted, however, when his father, Arturo, announces that he wants Marcelo to attend a “regular” high school in the fall. Marcelo, a young man with high-

functioning Asperger’s Syndrome, resists and his father agrees to allow Marcelo to choose his own school on the condition that he foregoes his job training ponies and instead works in the mailroom of his father’s law firm. Marcelo agrees to participate in what his father refers to as the “real world,” where he is confronted with complex situations, moral dilemmas, and people who may not have his best interests at heart.



Wayland, April Halprin. (2009). *New Year at the Pier: A Rosh Hashanah Story*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

In an author’s note which prefaces the text, author April Halprin Wayland explains that during Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year), many Jewish people participate in the ceremony of Tashlich. Primarily about letting go of the past, but also as a way to remind participants to make amends for past wrongdoings, Tashlich involves walking to a body of water, singing psalms, and throwing pieces of stale bread into the water (each representing something the individual regrets doing during the past year). In this contemporary realistic fiction picturebook, protagonist Izzy takes part in Tashlich with his family. The book chronicles the difficulty Izzy has confronting his regrets and apologizing to those he feels he has wronged. Although he is not able to apologize to everyone as he intends, by participating in Tashlich, Izzy is able to return home with a “clean, wide-open” heart. Stéphane Jorisch’s pen and ink, watercolor and gouache illustrations supplement and extend the text, aiding those unfamiliar with Tashlich and Rosh Hashanah in inferring the meaning of some of the Hebrew words interspersed throughout the book.

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PLEASE TOTAL DUES:		00-34b Rev 8/08																

IRA Individual Membership Application

Available Online at: <http://www.reading.org/downloads/membership/individual-MACF-080626.pdf>

IRA membership is your best choice for professional resources. As an IRA member you can: Subscribe to top-rated journals; register for meetings at the member rate; and buy books and IRA products with your member discount. All memberships and journal subscriptions are for a term of one year. Online ordering is available for regular and student memberships and subscriptions, and for discounted packages for those living in countries with developing economies (as identified by the World Bank). For those who wish to pay by check or money order, or who prefer to fax or mail an application, download a form from: http://marketplace.reading.org/memberships/IRA_Membership_Main.cfm.

IRA Student Membership Application

<http://www.reading.org/downloads/membership/student-SACF-080626.pdf>

INTERNATIONAL Reading Association PO Box 6021, Newark, DE 19714-6021, USA Student Membership		PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY: SACF FIRST NAME INITIAL LAST NAME STREET ADDRESS CITY AND STATE/PROVINCE COUNTRY ZIP/POSTAL CODE E-MAIL ADDRESS TEL. <input type="checkbox"/> Home <input type="checkbox"/> Office LOCAL COUNCIL #																
PLEASE CHECK JOURNALS: <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Reading Teacher</i> (learners up to age 12) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Lectura y Vida</i> (Spanish)		All options include IRA's bimonthly newspaper, <i>Reading Today</i> Book Club members automatically get 9 new IRA books during their membership year, AT SAVINGS OF MORE THAN \$80! PLEASE ALLOW 4-6 WEEKS FOR PROCESSING. PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE																
MEMBERSHIP RATES with Book Club <table border="1"> <tr> <td>One Journal</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$42</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$181</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Two Journals</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$60</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$199</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Three Journals</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$78</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$217</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Four Journals</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$96</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$235</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Basic Membership (includes <i>Reading Today</i> only)</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$24</td> <td><input type="checkbox"/> \$163</td> </tr> </table>		One Journal	<input type="checkbox"/> \$42	<input type="checkbox"/> \$181	Two Journals	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60	<input type="checkbox"/> \$199	Three Journals	<input type="checkbox"/> \$78	<input type="checkbox"/> \$217	Four Journals	<input type="checkbox"/> \$96	<input type="checkbox"/> \$235	Basic Membership (includes <i>Reading Today</i> only)	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24	<input type="checkbox"/> \$163	4 EASY WAYS TO CONTACT IRA: • CALL 800-336-7323, weekdays 9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. EST Outside the U.S. and Canada: 302-731-1600 • E-MAIL to customerservice@reading.org • FAX to 302-737-0878 • ONLINE at www.reading.org CREDIT CARD ACCOUNT NUMBER (VISA, MASTERCARD, AMEX) CREDIT CARD EXPIRATION DATE SIGNATURE	
One Journal	<input type="checkbox"/> \$42	<input type="checkbox"/> \$181																
Two Journals	<input type="checkbox"/> \$60	<input type="checkbox"/> \$199																
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A colorful pirate-themed illustration. In the background, a large green palm tree stands on a sandy beach. To the left, a pirate ship with a red flag is on the water. In the foreground, a pirate with a red beard, a black eye patch, and a yellow bandana sits on the sand, reading a red book. A green parrot is perched on his shoulder. To his right is an open wooden treasure chest filled with gold coins and several books. More books and gold coins are scattered on the sand around him. The sky is blue with white clouds.

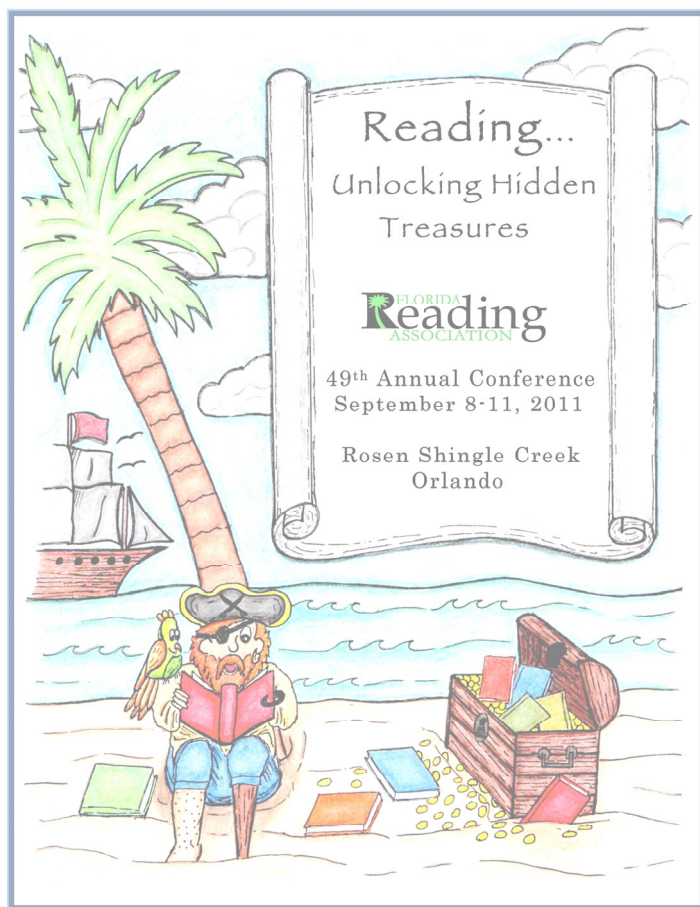
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